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Marginalia

Part I

PAUL ELMER MORE

THESE random notes are called "Marginalia" because they were suggested by scribbling annotations on the margin of my books, or by reflection on the margin of life. In part also they are autobiographical, or at least approach that, to me, rather distasteful form of literature as close as, probably, I shall ever come. My old friend, and enemy, Stuart P. Sherman, used to plague me for writing about such nonentities as Aphra Behn when I might so much more profitably, in his opinion, devote my time to an account of my own spiritual adventures and inner development. And others, including Professor Shafer, who has even undertaken to supply that deficiency, have made the same plea. I am afraid these scattered recollections are a poor response to so flattering a request.

I should like to dedicate these "Marginalia" – if dedicate is not too heavy a word – to the four good Baltimoreans (who will understand why I give them that title) for their assiduous kindness to me during the months of illness when the notes were put to-

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gether. So much of what is written was borrowed from, or colored by, their animated discussions over the teacups in my room of confinement that it would be a failure in courtesy not to name them here; and, besides, they must bear a certain responsibility for encouraging me in a style of writing which, to tell the truth, I took up rather reluctantly: Francis Godolphin, Whitney Oates, Theodore Greene, and Asher Hinds.

Finally, I would lend a little weight to my dedication by quoting a few lines abridged from the Loeb translation of one of Seneca's *Epistles*:

> I owe my life to philosophy, and that is the least of my obligations! My friends, too, helped me greatly towards good health; I used to be comforted by their cheering words, by the hours they spent at my bedside, and by their conversation. Nothing refreshes and aids a sick man so much as the affection of his friends.

I

Tucked away in a corner of my library is a copy of John Philips's translation of *Don Quixote* in the rare first edition dated 1687. This Philips was a nephew of the great Milton, but a very different man from his uncle; and, indeed a more senseless and flippant translation than this same version of *Don Quixote* has seldom appeared in English. Consider the solemn stateliness of Cervantes turned into such dancing foppery as this:

> In some part of *Mancha*, of which the Name is at present slipt out of my memory, not many years ago, there liv'd a certain Country Squire, of the Race of King *Arthur's* Tilters, that formerly wander'd from Town to

Town, Cas'd up in Rusty old Iron, with Lance in Rest, and a Knight-Templar's Target; bestriding a forlorn *Pegasus*, as Lean as a Dover Post-Horse, and a confounded Founder'd Jade to boot.

No one, I think would ever shake the dust from this volume for any interest, except that perhaps of curiosity, in its printed matter. I myself disturb its rest only to turn to the blank page following the table of contents, whereon are inscribed in faded ink these remarkable stanzas, evidently set down many years ago and in careless haste:

What is Friendship but a Name
A charm that lulls to sleep
a glittering gem th^o false the same
which leaves the wretch to weep

Th^o oft the Task it has been tried
to gain this gewel Rare
but disappointed we have sigh^d
to find it light as air

Goldsmith

The first of these stanzas is, of course, a clumsy variant of the well-known lines on friendship in Goldsmith's "The Hermit," and the second takes the place, awkwardly enough, of the equally well-known lines on love. The two stanzas of that ballad are written in the memory of all the world, but I transcribe them here for the sake of comparison:

And what is friendship but a name,
A charm that lulls to sleep;
A shade that follows wealth or fame,
But leaves the wretch to weep?

And love is still an emptier sound,
The modern fair one's jest;
On earth unseen, or only found
To warm the turtle's nest.

The ballad of "Edwin and Angelina" (Goldsmith himself did not name it "The Hermit") was first printed privately for the Countess of Northumberland in 1764 or 1765. Later, in 1766, it appeared in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, somewhat changed in form, although the two stanzas in question remained without alteration. When and by whom, then, were these mongrel verses written in my copy of *Don Quixote*? I have builded a dozen dreams to answer that question.

I have thought they might simply be the work of some one of treacherous memory who supposed he was quoting Goldsmith; but the most untrammeled memory conceivable could scarcely have constructed the four loose-jointed lines of the second stanza out of the printed text. Or were they copied by some friend of Goldsmith's from a loose scrap of paper, perhaps, where the poet had jotted down roughly a sentiment which he was afterwards to insert in his ballad in a changed and developed form? Or possibly were they spoken extempore by the poet and so written down from recollection by some one who had heard them? The supposition that Goldsmith composed them is plausible enough, and would give striking evidence of his care in elaborating and correcting to which Foster has called attention. All the crudeness of the first stanza as it stands in the *Don Quixote* has been eliminated, and in place of the superfluous and ungrammatical second stanza he has added the lines on love, as if to preach a sermon on Shakespeare's text:

Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly.

The handwriting bears every evidence of having been set down long ago, and not improbably during the lifetime of Goldsmith himself. In fact, a somewhat careful comparison of the lines with Goldsmith's own chirography would lead to the supposition that the poet had traced the words with his own hand. But for the omission of the Christian name to the signature, I should have adopted this hypothesis without hesitation, and that difficulty is not, I think, final. Under any one of these suppositions the verses must have been composed before the date of the original ballad of "Edwin and Angelina," and I have often wondered which of the grievous chances of his life – and God had given him his share – could have wrung these bitter words from poor Noll. The mind naturally goes back to the year 1755, when Smollett made his translation of *Don Quixote.* Could this version of Philips's have been used by Smollett, and could Goldsmith in some fit of petulance against his friend – and more than once the relationship between the two authors was strained – have scribbled hastily these lines of disillusion where Smollett might one day see them? Idle fancies and unprofitable, but they rise of themselves on reading these words in faded ink and beneath them the signature of a much-loved poet.

II

It is easy to put one's finger on the faults of *John Inglesant* – the unvaried sweetness of the style, the uncertainty at any particular moment whether the hero is somnolent or awake, dazed or sober, the artificiality of the Italian scenes, copied as we know not from observation (Shorthouse was never in Italy) but from books and the journals of his more travelled father. But in the end it leaves the impression of a very great book, of something unique as a whole in English literature, and at its moments of climax standing the test of comparison with the greatest. The author knew, and could reproduce, certain aspects of the religious life of the seventeenth century as no one else has done. This has come to me forcibly while reading the novel aloud, now many years since a former perusal, though something of the sort I tried to express in my essay on the biography of Shorthouse published by his wife in 1905.

There is indeed little in the essay, which I have taken up after the novel, that seems to me to demand revision. In particular I am fairly well satisfied with the treatment of Quakerism and Platonism as these entered into the life and work of Shorthouse. My only shock was when I came to the account of the three-part battle in the Anglican Church which was started by the Tractarian movement. The offensive words are on page 222 of Shelburne Essays III:

> The impression left on my own mind has been in the highest degree contradictory and exasperating; one labors incessantly to know what all this tumult is about, and I should suppose that no more inveterate and vicious display of parochialism was ever enacted in this world. . . . The intrusion of a single idea into that mad logomachy would have been a phenomenon more appalling than the appearance of a naked body in a London drawing-room.

There I held my breath. Particularly after my recent study of J. B. Mozley it struck me that to say no ideas were at stake in that conflict was simply to abnegate one's intelligence.

The simple truth is that I was at that time a little ignorant of, and entirely unsympathetic with, the principles involved in the struggle of the Church whether in the nineteenth or the seventeenth century. Or, to quote the bitter words of Mr. Shafer at the conclusion of his book on myself and American criticism, I had not "become hopelessly submerged in that atmosphere of determined and bold pretense which unfortunately characterizes 'Catholic' Episcopalians in the United States and in England". Instead, I was desperately engaged in searching out some ground of solid reality, and of spiritual rest, in a type of "pure religion" divested of all dogma and discipline and "myth", a harmless concession to the truth of some spiritual abstractions which supposedly can elevate and pacify the soul without intruding any claims on our intellect or any authority over our personal liberty.

What strikes me most however on reading the essay after the interval of so many years is my failure to note how deeply my own philosophy of life was moulded (perhaps I should say was to be moulded) by *John Inglesant*. At the time of writing the essay perhaps I should not have mentioned this indebtedness, even had it been felt by me, being sharply reticent in those days of such personal confessions. As a matter of fact I was quite unaware of the slow working of the book on my mind, and indeed was still unaware of it when I began my recent rereading of the novel. But if I am sure now of anything of the sort, it is of the fact that this triple strand of Quakerism – by which term I mean those intimations of the Otherworld such as Whittier describes so beautifully in his "The Pennsylvania Pilgrim" as coming to Daniel Pastorius:

> *. . . a Voice spake in his ear,*
> *and lo! all other voices far and near*
> *Died at that whisper, full of meanings clear.*
>
> *The Light of Life shone round him; one by one*
> *The wandering lights, that all-misleading run,*
> *Went out like candles paling in the sun.–*

if I am sure of anything, then, it is that my own noetic growth has been, like Inglesant's, shaped by this triple strand of Quakerism (which so easily merges into the Platonic Logos), of Platonism also, and the sort of Catholicism to which Inglesant returned at the last and which has been slowly, with much fumbling but with steady progress, worked out by the Anglican Church. The meaning and significance of that Platonic Catholicism I have tried to expound in my introduction to *Anglicanism.*

III

Why is it that Whittier's "The Pennsylvania Pilgrim" has never received any general recognition and indeed seems scarcely to be known today? It is, I should say, quite the most finished of Whittier's longer pieces, a thing of exquisite loveliness and charm. But the same vagary of taste often rouses my wonder. An instance that occurs to me at the moment is Walter Savage Landor's "Iphigenia and Agamemnon" which, as far as I know, has passed unnoticed by critics and amateurs. The inspiration of Landor's little idyll is plainly from Euripides, but in pathos and a kind of virginal beauty it affects me beyond anything that Euripides ever wrote. It would not be much of an exaggeration to reckon it the most perfectly classical bit of verse in the English language.

IV

Early this morning in bed, asleep or half-asleep, I heard my name called, with a long protraction of the vowel sound *AU* and a kind of muffling of the final *L*. This has occurred to me a number of times, and always in the same manner and with the same intonation. The audition is as realistic as the hearing of my name when fully awake. Always I have a curious sense of recognizing the voice as familiar yet of being unable to attach it certainly to any one known to me. It is very close to my ear, startlingly close, yet seems to come out of another world. Whether it is of the nature of an expostulation or an appeal, I can never quite determine. Is it a cry of dissatisfaction with some lowering of my standards of life, a protest against some hardening of my mind towards the invisible things of the spirit, or is it a call to go out thither where already I long to be, and to join there with some one who is alone and needs my comforting? Always I have a perfectly clear sensation that if I did not wake up, as invariably I do, at the sound, something would happen and I should obey the summons, and know. I am left with the conviction that I have been upon the border of a strange adventure, and that something, I cannot guess what, was about to break through upon me from beyond.

V

Picked up by chance in the college library Woodhouselee's memoirs of Henry Home Lord Kames in three volumes, an amazing discovery. I had known of the book, but only in the vaguest way, yet it is after Boswell one of the most comprehensive and illuminating accounts of life in the eighteenth century. On page 151, Vol. I, the summary of Home's activities in Edinburgh and on his estate at Kames, lets one into the heart of the Age, at its idealized best, in the combination of business and leisure. I do not know where else in biography one gets a stronger sense of the possibility of innocent and energetic happiness. And in the course of the work all the great questions of the period are touched on – theories of history, law, economics, science, evolution, society, literary taste, ethics, religion – a marvelous record of the intellectual interests of those old Scots lawyers and judges. And all simply told in the stately English that seems so abstract, yet really is beautifully concrete. The balance of judgement displayed by subject and author alike may be illustrated by the observations in the second volume on Ossian. As for the correspondents, they include such names as David Hume, Lord Hardwicke, Mrs. Montagu, and Benjamin Franklin. The surprise at happening upon so rich a work was only equalled by finding, from uncut pages, that no one in Princeton has ever read through the volumes since first they were put on the shelves, probably soon after 1814, the date of publication of this second edition. This is not the only case of the kind – by a long way – that has taught me how seldom our college men go beyond the common routine of study. Courses are given, and have been given, on the eighteenth century, yet this extraordinary treasury of the thought and manners of the time has never excited anyone's curiosity.

VI

Re uncut leaves, as our gentlemen of commerce would say. My epitaph is prepared and ready to be engraved on marble: HERE LIES ONE WHO WROUGHT A REVOLUTION IN THE BODLEIAN – incredible but true. It happened in this way. I was digging up matter for *Anglicanism* in the reading room. Before me lay open a folio volume on the right hand page of which lay the sheet of paper on which I was copying from the left hand side. The watch-dog of the room tapped me on the shoulder and told me I was breaking the rules; my paper must be laid on the desk and not on the open book. I recognized the reasonableness of the rule, and complied. A few days after that I happened to disembowel from some remote cellar a volume, the leaves of which had never been cut. On leaving I tapped my friend, the watch-dog, on the shoulder, and asked him what would be done to a man who cut the pages of one of his precious old books. Oh, says he, we thank him for that. Business took me away from Oxford for a couple of weeks. On my return I found at every desk of the reading room a paper-cutter attached to a long and very shining brass chain. If this was not a revolution, what was it?

VII

The Church Times of London has printed a very flattering and, I may add without vanity, intelligent notice of the *Selected Shelburne Essays.* The writer spreads his encomium pretty wide but he takes exception to two of the essays as not worthy of inclusion. The first is that on Lafcadio Hearn which, as he says, "is a subject of scarcely sufficient weight" for the superstructure. To this restriction I assent readily; but there are extenuations to the offense. At the time of writing the essay Hearn was by no means an insignificant figure, but one who held a considerable part in public interest; and I am not sure that in years to come something of his importance may not be revived. But however that may be, and such revivals among figures of secondary rank are extremely rare, the reviewer's censure points to a real difficulty of the critic who would deal with contemporary literature. A few years ago at the solicitation of the editor of *La Revue de Paris* I paid my compliments to a group of American writers then high in public esteem—Theodore Dreiser and James Cabell Branch and Sherwood Anderson and John Dos Passos. Who today reads Dreiser or Anderson, or cares to hear about them? Cabell's name is as exploded as his myths. Dos Passos still has considerable vogue but who will remember him ten or fifteen years from now?

The other essay to which the reviewer takes exception is that on Christina Rossetti. His complaint is that I am "overoccupied with the sex of that great poet", while overlooking the "scarcely-controlled passion of some of her poems". Sex is a highly ambiguous word; if the reviewer had written "femininity" I should have accepted his stricture without reservation. It is true that here as elsewhere in my critical estimates I have tended to over-emphasize some particular trait of an author, though it may be a central one, to the obscuring of other qualities. And it is true that I have not sufficiently brought out the passion that underlies much of Miss Rossetti's femininity. This has just been enforced upon my attention by reading her "Despised and Rejected" in an anthology on *The Sundays of Man's Life*. The poem has not fallen into that gulf of oblivion which, as I have noted, has swallowed "The Pennsylvania Pilgrim" and "Iphigenia and Agamemnon"; this is shown by its inclusion in an anthology. But it is, I think, very little known and has never been commented on as one of the most passionate of religious poems in the language, surpassing in this respect, as I should say, even Crashaw. For that reason I take the space to copy it here.

My sun has set, I dwell
In darkness as a dead man out of sight;
And none remains, not one, that I should tell
To him mine evil plight
This bitter night.
I will make fast my door
That hollow friends may trouble me no more.

"Friend, open to Me." – Who is this that calls?
Nay, I am deaf as are my walls;
Cease crying, for I will not hear
Thy cry of hope or fear.
Others were dear,
Others forsook me: what art thou indeed
That I should heed
Thy lamentable need?
Hungry should feed,
Or stranger lodge thee here?

"Friend, My Feet bleed.
Open the door to Me and comfort Me."
I will not open, trouble me no more.
Go on Thy way footsore,
I will not rise and open unto thee.
"Then is it nothing to thee? Open, see
Who stands to plead with thee.
Open, lest I should pass Thee by, and thou
One day entreat my Face
And howl for grace,
And I be deaf as thou art now.
Open to Me."

Then I cried out upon Him: Cease,
Leave me in peace: fear not that I should crave
Aught Thou mayst have.
Leave me in peace, yea trouble me no more,
Lest I arise and chase thee from my door.
What, shall I not be let
Alone, that Thou dost vex me yet?

But all night long that voice spoke urgently:
  "Open to Me."
Still harping in mine ears:
  "Rise, let Me in."
Pleading with tears:
"Open to Me. That I may come to thee."
While the dew dropped, while the dark
hours were cold:
  "My Feet bleed, see My Face,
  See My Hands bleed that bring
  thee grace,

  My Heart doth bleed for thee,
  Open to Me."
So till the break of day:

Then died away
That voice, in silence as of sorrow;
Then footsteps echoing like a sigh
Passed me by,
Lingering footsteps slow to pass.
On the morrow
I saw upon the grass
Each footprint marked in blood, and on my door
The mark of blood for evermore.

VIII

Christina Rossetti's poems are on a particular shelf of the Shelves of the Saints, where I have collected the works of several feminine writers who make what might be called a separate little school of religious feeling in the nineteenth century. With Miss Rossetti stand ranged Mrs. Meynell, Louisa Shore, Louise Imogen Guiney, Michael Fairless, Mary Coleridge, and, not to be forgotten, the incomparable Dora Greenwell. As I am calling attention to poems that have slipped out of memory, I should like to quote here a piece from Mrs. Meynell which is perhaps the most exquisitely refined of all those on this feminine shelf. I do not mean to say that Mrs. Meynell has been forgotten among readers of quiet taste, and the poem I am about to cite can be found in anthologies. But it has not, I think, ever received quite the notice it deserves for its perfect artistry and profound yet chastened imagination.

Christ in the Universe

With this ambiguous earth
His dealings have been told us. These abide:

The signal to a maid, the human birth,
The lesson, and the young Man crucified.

But not a star of all
The innumerable host of stars has heard
How he administered this terrestrial ball.
Our race have kept their Lord's entrusted word.

Of his earth-visiting feet
None knows the secret, cherished, perilous,
The terrible, shamefast, frightened, whispered, sweet,
Heart-shattering secret of his way with us.

No planet knows that this
Our wayside planet, carrying land and wave,
Love and life multiplied, and pain and bliss,
Bears, as chief treasure, one forsaken grave.

Nor, in our little day,
May his devices with the heavens be guessed,
His pilgrimage to thread the Milky Way
Or his bestowals there be manifest.

But in the eternities,
Doubtless we shall compare together, hear
A million alien Gospels, in what guise
He trod the Pleiades, the Lyre, the Bear.

O, be prepared, my soul!
To read the inconceivable, to scan
The million forms of God those stars unroll
When, in our turn, we show to them a Man.

Where all is so exquisitely finished, it may seem impertinent to select for notice any particular success. But I should like to point to the third and fourth lines of the first stanza as a notable triumph in what is called the economy of means in effecting a great result. Could anything be more simply said, yet could any device of rhetoric convey to us better the scope of that marvellous but brief life? And it has its element of surprise. "The young Man crucified" – how hard it is to think of that career ended when the Christ was only thirty or thirty-three years old, not much more than a boy. The miracle of that crowded mission fulfilled in a year or two, and the world a different place, new-made, by a few words!

Some day, *D.V.*, I must write a full-length essay on these women who have their place on the Shelves of the Saints. They are singularly alike in tone, yet each with her individual impress of character and her special method of art. I like best, however, to think of them as a united choir rather than as isolated singers.

IX

Two foreign students recently, one from Switzerland, the other from Sweden, have consulted me about my philosophical theories, which they are studying for the doctor's degree in their respective universities. To both of them the dualistic thesis stood out as the binding thread running through all my work. This is an obvious view, which has been accepted by every critic, so far as I know, who has written on the subject. But it is as true as it is obvious that dualism may vary widely in its connotation, and my own use of the term has perhaps a certain peculiarity which needs to be noted. Emphatically I have not meant by it to set up an ironclad rival to the various metaphysics of the One. My intention has been much less ambitious than that, and implies no more than this, that in every field of experience, if I push my analysis to the end of my resources, I find myself brought up against a pair of irreconcilable, yet interrelated and interacting, contraries, such as "good" and "bad", "mind" and "body", the "One" and the "Many", "rest" and "motion". The dualist is one who modestly submits to this bifurcation as the ultimate point where clarity of definition obtains. Beyond this he refuses to follow reason in its frantic endeavor to reconcile these opposites by any logical legardemain in which one of the controlling factors of consciousness is brought out as an Absolute while the other disappears in the conjuror's hat. The dualist, in other words, though he may do homage to the reasoning faculty as the governor of practical conduct, yet balks at its pretension to discover in its own mechanism the ultimate source and nature of Being. He remains half-brother to the sceptic, whereas the monist is a metaphysical dogmatist.

I have said that it is the function of reason to deal with the contraries of experience in the field of "practical conduct". But this, it may be said, is only the superficial aspect of dualism; for the root of the matter, it should seem that we must look not to the logical faculty at all, but must penetrate to some deep substratum of the temperament or the emotions, to some obscure region of the soul itself, out of which spring the conflicting impulses to the religious and the worldly life. There, in that darkness where definitions fail us, lies the origin of the apparent and definable bifurcations. It is a division of what finally interests, and the nature of the dividing force, in so far at least as it touches religion, can be studied better in Newman perhaps than in any other English writer.

More than once Newman has said that from an early age the two things which seemed of importance to him were God and his own soul. One can understand why he put the matter in this form; yet I think an attentive reading of his works will show that what stood out for him against his own soul was not so much God as the whole Otherworld of which God may be the sovereign King but which can never be absorbed into his being. God indeed is present to Newman's mind; and at times, as in the great passage of the *Apologia*, comes magnificently to the front. But in general I do not find that sense of a personal Lord and Lover dominating his imagination as it does, for example, a St. Theresa. Rather, his imagination is haunted by that invisible realm beyond or outside of the range of the senses, which was called Ideal by Plato as constructed of Forms, or Ideas, seen by the eye of the soul, or Noetic by the later Platonists as grasped by the *nous*, or Spiritual by St. Paul. This to Newman, as I take it, even more than the being of a personal God, was the one thing important, the one thing he must make real to his soul against all the distractions of the world. For the mystery of this sense of the Otherworld is that, though never an illusion, it is strangely elusive. To this paradox Newman returns more than once in his books, the most elaborate passage being that in *The Idea of a University*, which I have quoted in an appendix to *The Religion of Plato*. It is never an illusion, I say; never a power that deceives or allures into evil and error; but it is elusive, impalpable, slipping from our grasp when we think we have it most firmly fixed, and hard to make concrete to the imagination and to impose on the will; lying like the shadowed reflections of the sky on the surface of a quiet pool but vanishing away when a breeze ruffles the mirror. The glory of Newman's genius as a master of language lay in his power of conveying to the reader some derivative notion of the reality of that noetic sphere of which he himself was, apparently by birthright, a citizen. In this gift, and not in philosophic argument, where in truth Newman was not strong, resided his royal prerogative over the souls of others; there we get the force of his chosen motto, *cor ad cor loquitur;* there by feebler wings he can be followed at a distance,

Sailing with supreme dominion
Thro' the azure deep of air.

But beside this realm of the Spirit lies another kingdom, that of nature, as we call it, which is not at all retiring or evasive. Rather it is visible, palpable, insistent, ever clamorous of attention. It is not elusive, but by a strange paradox illusory, the very heart and fountain of illusion. That is to say its real substance is less than its apparent substance, and its promises end in deception, disappointment, sometimes even in despair. But of the noetic world the truth and substance become more real by testing, and its promises are more than fulfilled if you grasp it tightly, cling to it, and obey its laws. And it follows too that just as the noetic world grows more real and solid, this phenomenal world loses in reality and substance. This is a law of experience to which Newman was keenly awake, and there is no more characteristic passage in his works than this in the first volume of his *Parochial Sermons*:

> And should it so happen that misfortunes come upon us (as they often do), then still more are we led to understand the nothingness of this world; then still more are we led to distrust it, and are weaned from the love of it, till at length it floats before our eyes merely as some idle veil, which, notwithstanding its many tints, cannot hide the view of what is beyond it; – and we begin, by degrees, to perceive that there are but two beings in the whole universe, our own soul, and the God who made it.

That, I take it, if we think of "God" as a synonym for the noetic world where He abides, points to the centre of Newman's religious life and is the core of his message. Certainly, at least, it is that in him which enchained so many of my younger years.

X

But to speak in this way of Newman is to anticipate. Long before I knew his name, from boyhood, childhood I might say, I felt myself, at first vaguely, or inarticulately, confronted by the two worlds between which my soul was compelled to choose its allegiance. My state was like that of one watching the pictures thrown by the old-fashioned stereopticon upon a screen. You saw, perhaps, a city street, with its houses and bustle of moving people. Then before your very eyes, these faded away into a fainter and fainter blur, and, overlying them and as it were blotting them out, appeared the dim suggestion of a silvan scene of trees and a running stream, which gained in sharpness of outline until the earlier picture vanished entirely and the new loveliness stood in its place. Then perhaps the process might be reversed. So in the larger field of consciousness there seemed to be such a kaleidoscopic oscillation of attraction between two alternating worlds. But there was a difference in this appeal to my attention and in their hold on my interest, springing from the contrast between the illusory and the elusive character of their two natures.

The world of sense, however its solid-seeming phenomena might sway the affections, had a strange way of losing its solidity and, at the very moment when you reached out your hand to grasp it, of melting away into a vapor; the better you knew it, the less there appeared to know, and its blatant reality ended in betrayal. With the other world the process was of the different sort. It was evasive at first, but with the effort of attention took on a firmer and firmer body, and to the stability of your interest it responded by assuming ever more stable hues and outline. Its reality, its substantiality, was there, in itself, was its very being; this you knew always; yet somehow, in its relation to you, this substantial reality seemed dependent on your own endeavor and constancy, as if created by you. It is scarcely too much to say that the development of my noetic life, the history of the altering attitude towards certain fundamental articles of belief from book to book as these were written, has been governed by the intermittent endeavor, from varying angles of approach, to discover some instrument, some formula of thought, which would give a fixed solidity to the tenuity of a vision always present, always inviting, yet always threatening to vanish away – this rather than any transaction with a logical rationalization of dualism.

In childhood and youth, indeed, such a problem barely vexed the tranquillity of my spirit; I lived in full security of the old inherited faith of Calvin. And that creed, with me as with my ancestors, had its noble aspect, maintaining an authority over the conscience, and lending a logical consistency to the fluctuating world of the spirit. But it had one terrible weakness. The very rigidity of its logic, one dogma growing out of another as the theorems of Euclid are linked together, was a menace. A chain is no stronger than any one of its links, snap one and the two ends fly apart. Especially, break down the axiom on which the lengthened chain depends, and the whole concatenation of syllogisms so laboriously built up by reason comes tumbling to the ground.

Now Calvinism, for me as for many of my generation, was in just this perilous state. What Calvin in his *Institutions* had done was simply this. He took over for the basis of his systematic theology that definition of God as the absolute unconditioned Cause of all things, which the Church long before him had borrowed from the metaphysicians, but which, in the Church, lay, and lies, like an undigested and indigestible mass beside another idea of God inherited from an utterly different source. To the hard brain of the French Protestant such a compromise was intolerable; he would have consistency or death. Forthwith he proceeded to draw out of this axiom of an unconditioned first Cause all the logical consequences which the orthodox theologians had glanced at and had dallied with in their scholastic manuals, but practically had never really admitted.

In such form religion came to me, dominating my childhood in a manner hard for me now to comprehend. But doubts gathered with the years. I began to question the very notion of a God so constructed; and I can remember the hour when these doubts reached a climax and forced me to make a final and, so far as Calvinism was concerned, irrevocable decision. It was at a Sunday morning service, and the minister, a powerful and eloquent expositor of the creed, was preaching on that terrible text: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." He spared not, and I knew that, properly applied, the words of the text were true; but did they apply to that theological system the preacher was urging me to accept? Here was a question of reason, not of the choice between good and evil. With something like a paroxysm of certainty, with bitter actual tears of regret, I cast off, once and for all, the faith that had nurtured the better life of my childhood and youth.

My account of this event, a conversion *à rebours* so to speak, may be colored by later experience and reflection; and I had not at the time analyzed the theological problem as I have been doing on this page; nor indeed had I made much study of theology or philosophy. I did not know that my revolt was in the main against a particular formulation of theism rather than against the spirit of Christianity. And I have often wondered what line my experience might have taken had I been brought up in a form of belief and a practice of worship from which the office of the imagination and of the aesthetic emotions had not been so ruthlessly evicted. It has seemed to me, though I may be reading the present into the past, that as a Catholic, Roman or Anglican, the associated elements of worship might have carried me through those critical years in a state of intellectual humility until the truer relation between the divine and the human had emerged in that form of wondering faith which we distinguish by the name of sacramentalism. As it is, with belief in the inherited dogmas of a sect went the whole inheritance of Christianity, and with that for the time being all realization of the noetic life. I left the church that forenoon as one goes out of a spiritual home to wander in the bleak ways of an alien world.

XI

With many others who have gone through a crisis such as mine the result has been pure irreligion and materialism. And for myself I went so far in that direction as to flirt with the ambition of fabricating out of the mathematical law of probability what the scientists of the day had failed to accomplish, some final explanation of the source and nature of things. But this was only an ephemeral mood. The formula of faith might be lost and with it, apparently, the possibility of dogmatic religion of any sort; but that obsession of a mystery beyond the senses, out of which my dualistic philosophy was to spring, those intimations of a whole ghostly world corresponding to something latent in the soul itself – all this was really not touched by the inroads of intellectual doubts. The house of the spirit was shattered; what remained was a craving, a kind of necessity laid upon the intellect, to find some formula whether of creed or of worship which should respond to those elusive intimations and, as it were, build a new house for the evicted spirt.

My first adventure was to turn to the religious philosophy of India. And here it may be proper to say that at the beginning my interest was caught by the Brahmanic theosophy of the Upanishads, in opposition to Babbitt's absorption in Buddhism, but that in the end, after so many lusty battles, I have come to agree with him in regarding the primitive doctrine of Buddha as the consummation of Hindu thought. That, however, is by the way. What attracted me to this Oriental faith, whether Vedanta or Buddhism, was just this, that it was in fact and efficacy a faith, yet demanded belief in none of the things I had discarded. Here was a creed, if so it might be called, which in its final formulation included no omnipotent God as Creator and Ruler, nor had any apparatus of Platonic Ideas or of an eternal heaven and hell; its appeal (I speak of it always in its most expurgated form) was to what might be called pure spirituality, to something deeper than what we ordinarily think of as "soul", to that in us which has no attachment or relation to the phenomenal world or to concrete experience. And I saw that by that creedless faith peace was attained and a peculiar kind of saintliness produced.

Here, I thought, might be my haven, and in this hope I gave myself to the study of Sanskrit and Pâli and wrote my *A Century of Indian Epigrams* (not to mention other books which I should like forgotten). It even got into some of the earlier Shelburne

Essays. And this provides a key to certain inconsistencies in my attitude at the time towards Christianity. Deep and genuine as was my intellectual surrender to the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gîtâ there was something in me that they left unsatisfied, a thirst they could not quench, though I did not know what or why. All this while I was reading such authors as Newman and Shorthouse with zest and sympathy, but with this curious twist of interest: what I got from them and what held me, was exactly what I had sought to escape in fleeing to Oriental mysticism, yet critically, in the end, I could scold them for that very reason. This ambiguity in my own mind explains, I think, the fact that my essay on Shorthouse is for the most part laudatory and half reveals the influence he was exercising upon me, yet concludes with a petulant outburst against what was to show itself as the principal element of that influence. Even more significant is the final condemnation of Newman (S.E. VIII, p. 74) because at the time of his conversion he did not manfully accept the sceptical demolition of the Christian mythology and the whole fabric of external religion, and on the ruin of such creeds rise to that supreme insight which demands no revelation and is dependent on no authority – in other words because he did not become a Brahmin instead of a Roman Catholic! If in later years something of my interest in Newman abated, it was for other reasons.

XII

A lovelier ode to spring was never indited than Horace's *Solvitur acris hiems*, in which we can almost hear the breaking of the fetters of winter and catch the chanties of busy men as they draw their boats down to the sea, and can see the Graces once more dancing their rounds on the flowered meadows. All the earth is filled with the joy of the great resurrection. And then the moral: O little men, be not deceived. Think not that your winter is to be followed by any spring. From such long hope the brevity of life cuts you off. Already the night is closing upon you, and you are on the way to that dull home of death where no joy is and from whence there is no return. This is not the only ode in which Horace bids us forgo the long hope – *spem longam reseces;* such a deprivation is the very root of his philosophy, *carpe diem*, snatch the day and be not credulous of any morrow.

Nor was the idea peculiar to Horace among the pagan poets. Catullus gives it a new pathos by expressing it in his tripping hendecasyllables: The sun may trick his beams and flame once more in the forehead of the morning sky (to borrow Milton's adaptation in "Lycidas"), and the wasted moon may round out her orb, but for us when once our little light has set –

Ours is nothing but one long night of slumber.

And then I turn to the most fragrant of the Christian poets:

How fresh, O Lord, how sweet and clean
Are thy returns! Ev'n as the flowers in spring. . . .
  Grief melts away
  Like snow in May,
As if there were no such cold thing.

No one can read Horace and George Herbert together without feeling that a whole world of emotion has slipped in between them; for the very gist of Herbert's song, in the lines that follow, is hope, the long hope, that the returning spring bade the ancient poets cut away. We do not often, I think, pause to consider the change that came into the world with the advent of this new hope. Christianity may seem to have failed in so many ways; it has done so little for the morals and intelligence of civilization, so little to mitigate the evils of social and international injustice, so little to impose restraint on the insurgent passions of mankind; but this one thing it has effected, the offering of hope, the long hope, to the souls of individual men. You cannot forget it, cannot hide away the fact:

Une immense espérance a traversé la terre.

Goethe, in one of those strange glimpses into the secret of Christianity that occasionally pierced his pagan armor, has used this for what is perhaps the most dramatic moment in *Faust.* His hero has gone through all the learning of the age, and found nothing but emptiness and disappointment. In his distress he has called for help upon the Earth-Spirit, with whom he claims kinship, and he has been contemptuously rebuffed. There is nothing left for him but escape from the fret of living into the deep slumber of oblivion. The cup of poison is at his lips, when from the cathedral nearby there floats through his window the refrain of the Easter song, for it is the dawn of that day when the new hope was born:

Christ is arisen!

The contrast would have been even more startlingly effective if the Easter chant had been preceded by the great speech in which Faust strips off the various decorous illusions of life, ending with the curse upon patience and hope. But with all his dramatic sense Goethe lacked the faculty of dramatic construction, as could be shown by other scenes in *Faust*. For instance, Gretchen's heartbroken prayer to Mary should have been made in the cathedral and followed closely by the terrible answer of the monkish chant: *Dies irae, dies illa*, instead of being separated by so much irrelevant matter. But we must not be hypercritical. As it stands, that juxtaposition of Faust's despair with the pledge of the world's hope is a stroke of pure genius.

I like to think historically of the advent of this hope as indicated by three quotations from the Greek. The first is from the great chorus of the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus: "Sing woe! sing woe! but let the good overcome." It is, as it were, a desire, not a hope, but a desire prophetic of fulfillment.

The second is from the *Phaedo* of Plato, giving Socrates' intimations of immortality to his circle of timid friends on that last day of seeming defeat: "Fair is the prize [of immortality], and the hope great."

And the third was the utterance of another, also on the day of seeming defeat: "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

(*To be continued.*)

The New League

Hilaire Belloc

"We are subject" – said the Bishop of Burpham, in his weekly article – "to mortality." How true! Man is indeed subject to mortality, and not only he himself but his institutions. Even the League of Nations must obey this universal law, and though it is not twenty years since it first arose in its young strength and brilliance there are signs that restoration is needed.

It has done splendid work! To the League, even more than to the Democratic Parliaments of Europe, do we owe the glorious New Age the world is now entering. That brotherhood of all peoples which was but a dream to the pre-War world has been realized through the genius of Kant interpreted by the inspired statesmanship of the late Mr. President Wilson, not to mention the late Monsieur Thomas, Mr. Ko-Tung, Herr Apfelbaum, Miss Chaddle, and a host of others who, though their names may not be so familiar to the public, have labored with profit in the vineyard.

When we consider how vast a work the League has accomplished and still continues, it seems, at first sight, superfluous to suggest reform on however modest a scale. The League has drawn up a Protocol which is a model for the enforcement of universal peace. It has nominated, at great expense, a commission to examine the dispute between China and Japan.

It has offered its services in the Chaco dispute now happily settled; and great nations, bowing to its authority, have accepted mandates to lead and educate backward peoples on whom they have conferred the untold blessings of peace and civilization: the French in Syria, the Australians in New Guinea, and best of all the British in Palesitne. It has sympathetically heard the appeals of oppressed minorities and has advised a humane treatment of same. It has published upon their grievances reports which, had they been acted upon, would have ameliorated the lot of the sufferers, and it has recommended to their masters a better course of action which they would have done well to follow. But its crowning triumph was attained in this very year, when, for the first time in history, fifty nations, including the Aleutian Islands, combined under the leadership of Britain to impose sanctions upon an erring sister.

The League has done more. It has established new and more sympathetic relations between Capital and Labor, enlarging the profits of the one, reducing the hours and toil of the other, and reconciling both to a fruitful and contented fellowship, particularly in Barcelona, Marseilles, and San Francisco. It has taken no small interest in the White Slave Traffic with which it was peculiarly fitted to deal through the cosmopolitan character of its chief agents. It has worked in sympathy with, and supported by, the great Friendly Societies, notably the Freemasons, among whom the Grand Orient Lodge has been an unfailing friend. It has also, through various committees, opposed the consumption of opium, alcohol, and nicotine.

Yet, with all this world-wide achievement to its credit, close observers have noted imperfections which should be remedied. Certain of the Great Powers have, as yet, failed to see eye to eye with the League. France, it is felt, does not pull its weight. Italy is not, at heart, enthusiastic. Russia presents certain anomalous features, especially in her criminal procedure. Spain – for the moment at least – plays an insufficient part. Japan has withdrawn, as has the German Reich; and the United States – though eminently fitted by religion and morals for League ideals – has hitherto strangely refused to accept membership. Of all the great powers, Britain alone, as usual, does her duty to the full.

The League cannot act as the complete Parliament of Man so long as these deficiencies remain. The Prussians must be reconciled by the full and public reversal of the iniquitous Treaty of Versailles which robbed them of innumerable Polish subjects, their natural inferiors. The Japanese must be given liberty of action in the Far East (unless they have already taken it), and the great American Republic must in some way be convinced that its true interests can best be promoted at Geneva. How this shall be done it is for experts to decide.

The case of Abyssinia is indeed difficult. On the one hand that martyr nation has the strongest claim upon us all; on the other hand it has ceased to exist. But no political problem is insoluble, and with gentlemanly feeling on all sides – may we add, with ladylike behavior in the female members of the Commission – the apparently opposed interests of the Negus near Bath and the Italian government in Addis Ababa can surely be remedied. Meanwhile let us draw comfort from the fact that Egypt, so long oddly excluded, is about to enjoy the inestimable advantages of membership.

Moreover, the machinery of the League needs overhauling. In the very first place, its admirable staff, both permanent and casual, must be increased.

There are at present less than five thousand adults of both sexes dependent for a livelihood upon the League. This is including not only the statesmen of the world, receiving, even with perquisites, less than $15,000 a year each on an average; but the secretaries, under-secretaries, deputy secretaries, messengers, and cleaners, etc. Today, even on the permanent salaried staff, the lowest paid receives no more than some historian, poet, or priest; this is a scandal calling for immediate redress.

It is particularly to be remembered, when the task of reform is begun, that nothing would weaken the League more than to tamper with the system whereby the statesmen accredited to it put into the paid posts their dependents of both sexes, their friends, their relatives and household servants, their cast-off mistresses, and all others who have a claim or hold on them. This bond between all members of the League is the moral backbone of the institution; it should if anything be strengthened. On the matter of payment the whole secretariat is solid. Salaries must be increased from top to bottom. When that is done, and only when that is done, the numbers receiving money of the member-nations can and should be largely added to. Opinion on both these points is equally solid among the hotel-keepers and restaurateurs of Geneva who are essential to the proper functioning of the great assembly.

Whatever form the Renewed League of Nations takes it is imperative that the number of paid posts should be at least doubled and the average salary increased by at least one third.

By the way, when the League is renewed, all contracts for furniture and stationery should be renewed as they stand. Should any new contracts fall into the hands of firms unconnected by relationship or other ties with members of the League the present invaluable *esprit de corps* would suffer; but we can trust the common sense of what is, like every other Parliament, not only a representative but an autonomous body, to see that no outsider shall intrude.

Irving Babbitt as I Knew Him

G. R. ELLIOTT

MY FIRST sight of Babbitt was two decades ago. I had read his publications with mixed feelings, with admiration for his scholarship and force but with irritation at his roughshod treatment, as it seemed to me, of poetic imagination. Nor was that annoyance soothed away by a kind note which he had written to me upon an early essay of my own. I was a young professor of English literature in Bowdoin College and certainly words of commendation from Professor Babbitt were welcome; but he accompanied those words with other words urging that I should modify my point of view; and the proposed modification appeared to boil down to this, that I should adopt *his* point of view. This was not what he consciously intended to say; it was what I decided, upon reflection, that his note meant. I replied with critical sharpness and personal irritation. He wrote again, with a critical sharpness far surpassing mine, but with no personal irritation. That was irritating. I resolved to get a sight of this man who, like the Unmoved Mover of his master Aristotle, could cause an emotion which he did not feel or which, at least, he could fully repress. During my next visit to the Harvard Yard I joined the stream of students entering his classroom (having been informed that he was quite oblivious to foreign particles in that stream) and took a chair at the rear.

The man who presently entered the room and seated himself behind the desk was of big frame, slightly stooped. The face was craggy, the jaw obtrusive, the voice vibrant, the gestures quick and angular. And certainly when he spoke he laid down the law; but not as though the law were his own. It belonged to humanity, so he made one feel; it had been enacted by the parliament of history and he was a clerk announcing it. He did so in tones full of its importance but empty of his own. I had known many professors who were modest because they were mild, and some who were not modest because they were professors. But Babbitt was neither mild nor officious. The moral laws were for him too clear, urgent, and fateful to permit of gentle circumspection in the enouncing of them; but also they were so transcendent as to belittle his office.

He spoke to the students as if they were on his own level. The fact that they were not was sufficiently apparent to most of them, but not to all. A certain youth, sitting reclined with half-closed eyes, folded arms, and supercilious smile, interrupted the lecturer with a drawling objection. My professorial nerves gave a sympathetic twitch: such a youngster ought to be told that the brilliance of his mind could be heightened by an erect and becoming posture of his body. But Babbitt, showing no irritation and scarcely any cognizance of the young man's physical presence, descended upon his notions like a courteous bombshell. In this classroom as in Europe a war was under way, but a warfare of ideas, hard, polite, impersonal. Freedom of speech was the rule, but the master's manner intimated that true freedom of speech required freedom from personalities. There was something aloof in the shooting glances with which he surveyed his class. Incessantly his eyes and hands dived into the untidy heap of books and papers on his desk. That heap was his ammunition-dump. One watched fascinatedly while he extracted from its depths with inerrant dispatch the particular missile he wanted. He loaded his guns with citations; if you loaded yours with personal feelings, so much the worse for you. Piques and parades were negligible; personal inspirations were heavily discounted. To return his fire with any effect you had to let off an impersonal idea charged with solid fact.

But solid fact, for him, was apparently always moral fact; whereas I cherished the belief that there was such a thing as solid poetic fact. Was that belief merely a youthful illusion which a man who had passed his thirtieth birthday ought to leave behind him? Such was the question that forced itself upon me as I sat there silent. My answer was No, a loud internal No; which sounded there, however, like a rifle-shot amid bursting shells. When the bombardment ceased, that is when the class-hour ended, I advanced to the professor's desk and waited till a buzzing cluster of students had dispersed. Then I tackled him upon what seemed to me the least defensible assertion he had made during the hour. I forget now what it was, except that it had to do with poetic imagination. But I remember that presently I experienced the sensations of an outpost of soldiery who, on approaching a supposedly unguarded spot in the enemy's line, are greeted by a pretty nest of machine-guns. An amicable parley ensued, however; and a friendship began.

But our meetings were not very frequent until the academic year 1927-28 which I spent on sabbatical leave in Cambridge, partly to be near the Harvard library, partly to be near Babbitt. Earlier I should doubtless have been afraid to expose myself to his fire at such close quarters for so considerable a period. But now I was middle-aged; my art of defence was better; and Babbitt, growing old, was less explosive than formerly. Not that his vigor showed any signs of diminution. He was as full of labors as ever, and much of his scanty leisure was devoted to strenuous walking combined with strenuous thinking. One who wished to talk with him extensively had to walk with him extensively; thus he economized his time, killing two birds with one stone. Often I felt like one bird killed with two stones: physically and mentally exhausted I would totter home after parting from him, wondering whether I should be able three or four days later to keep our appointment for what he termed, euphemistically, "another little walk together". Never have I been so exercised, in several senses of this word, as I was during those three seasons, autumn, winter, and spring, in and about flat Cambridge. The sequel, the fourth season, was the summer of 1931 when I rented a vacation cottage not far from his among New Hampshire hills.

That was his last season of unbroken health. On an afternoon of July two years later his body lay silent in the chancel of the new Harvard chapel. That final scene was strange, hard to believe; though all of its externals were congruous enough. The service was austerely plain. Passages of excellent moral scripture, Christian and non-Christian, were recited from the high reading-desk; which closed a vista of white walls made whiter by the light of day. But the casket, beneath the desk, was covered with a crimson pall; and the sentences that were uttered above it, had in them frequent words of rich and deep color. There came to me and doubtless to others who were present a mysterious, overmastering sense of a glow of life in white light. . . . Presently I remembered hearing Babbitt humorously excuse himself for seldom attending the sermons delivered in this very chapel: they were not such, he had said, as to enable him with clear conscience to desert whatever piece of work he had on hand at the time. Then, instead of that place, which seemed to me a glorified lecture-hall rather than a church, I saw again in memory Babbitt's own lecture-room with himself at the desk. I began to recall him vividly in all the scenes wherein I had known him in life.

Walking on the hillsides of southern New Hampshire he would sometimes pause to call my attention to a scene that he loved. Not that he would *say* he loved it: the first person singular of the verb "love" was regularly omitted from his oral declensions. Whether and to what extent the words "I love" took form in his mind, God only knows; I cannot recall ever hearing them fall from his lips. Yet he was a man of strong and constant loves. He was very fond of the landscapes of New England. The ways we trod in that summertime, quite new to me, were very familiar to him; and he would interrupt a discussion, even a warm dispute, to make sure that I was not missing some or other beautiful prospect. It was the view as a whole, the composition of it, that he liked to emphasize; for instance, a valley below us ascending slowly on our left through meadows to wooded heights, but descending sharply on our right to where there was a glimpse of a lake deep-set among hills, with the bald cone of Monadnock towering close behind. After brief and definite comments given in a low voice, he would contemplate the scene in silence for a moment, then turn abruptly away from it; carrying it in his eyes, however, as he walked along. But soon the resumed discussion would bring to the fore an idea that he loved, and then the whole look of his face would change, withdrawing and concentering; as though, instead of the beautiful valley below, he was seeing an unseen star in front: he would pause to watch it. There were those two sorts of pause, the pause for the scene and the pause for the idea. He absorbed the scene; the idea absorbed him. For him the scene, as not for Wordsworth in the famous walking sonnet, was just some happy tone (of Maya?) slipping in between the idea coming and the idea gone.

In exposing an idea he would often use a peculiar and significant gesture. His right hand, rising beside its shoulder with spread fingers and outward palm, would make short lateral pushes in the air. There was not the slightest volitant or undulatory motion of the arm – no concession to flying, no fluent gracefulness. Those shoves of the open hand off into space – into the spaces of thought – were rigid and impersonal. They insisted that the principle of which he was talking was patently universal, belonging to everyone and no one. As for wrong opposing notions, his fingers would sweep them down and away, one after another, while his tongue attacked them. In assailing a tendency which he considered "nothing less than pernicious" (one of his favorite phrases) his aspect would become nothing less than predacious. The claw-like swoop of the hand, the metallic ring of the voice, the gnashing movement of the large irregular mouth, the thrusting jaw and commanding beak, would strike me into a dumb fascination as though I myself were the hapless prey. However, one noted also something indefinable in Babbitt's mien that stayed always above the combat, something that one associated with the upper part of his face, the large forehead and large blue eyes. I have never seen a pair of eyes that could so glint with the lust of battle while remaining at the same time so deeply imperturbable. They would fill with reverence when he was expatiating upon a great saint or sage. And sometimes the spread hand beside its shoulder would tilt slightly backwards as in a repressed or inchoate gesture of adoration.

But his moments of solemnity, even in intimate conversation, were very transient. Gravity was always there, but so was cheerfulness sparkling with quick and various wit. Certainly his style of talk (as in the case of Doctor Johnson) was far more flexible and alluring than his written style. His books have some passages of misplaced solemnity – owing, as one reviewer put it, with vast and solemn exaggeration, to "his attempt to apply philosophic first principles to every detail of modern life".* In his conversation, however, many a "detail of modern life" was treated with indulgent if satiric humor. One day I found him chuckling over the memory of a high Boston banquet at which he had been a guest on the previous evening. By way of appetizer and in spite of Prohibition, dashes of rare old rum were served in the bottoms of beautiful goblets. And many professorial faces at the table expressed a double question: what of the law of the land? and why so little drink in such a large container? The proper technique of course was, before sipping, to cherish the goblet in one's hands while inhaling the choice aroma with intruded nose. The awkwardness with which the guests performed, or omitted, this fine but then there unaccustomed rite, was rendered by Babbitt with exquisite ludicrousness. I asked, "How did you yourself make out?"—"Oh, I sniffed the stuff properly enough."

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* *The Times Literary Supplement* (London), December 8th, 1932. Regarding the "higher will" – an old datum of human experience and treated as such by many careful thinkers before Babbitt – the reviewer asserts: "it seems necessary to wait upon psychology before one can decide whether there is such a thing". Well, a reviewer who can wait thus solemnly upon current psychology, towards which Babbitt's attitude was very far from solemn, would naturally be opaque to Babbitt's grave wit. And this case is typical. Many of Babbitt's reviewers, though writing

His chief self-indulgence, perhaps, was laughter at self-indulgence. Gourmets tickled him immensely. And minor comfortablenesses that conventional people took for granted could set his big eyes twinkling. Once when we were discussing the subject of conditions favorable for literary composition, I let slip a piece of personal information that caused him to stare. "So you actually find it possible," he exclaimed, much amused, "to smoke while engaged in writing!" I was unable to see the joke. But presently I laughed when my fancy conjured up the impossible picture of Babbitt himself smoking while inditing, let's say, *Rousseau and Romanticism.*

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with modernistic lightness, had solemnly swallowed some or other current doctrine which he attacked with witty penetration; and their response was, "He is hopelessly solemn"! Their solemniferous levity slubbered his witty gravity.

After dinner he would smoke a cigar, but not with any succulency. The thing continually went out; and, perched as it was between two fingers of an open, jerkily gesturing hand, it seemed ever on the point of catapulting into space, if not into somebody's eye. However the eyes of others were not in much danger from Babbitt. His demeanor was carefully polite, sometimes too carefully; for, sociable by nature, he had also a moral conviction of the value of polite society. One could watch that conviction sustaining him in parlors when his temper was being sorely tried. His sometime attitude at teas brings to my mind a line from Lear, "Pour on, I will endure." At teas or after dinner when the company's conversation waxed oppressively conventional, he would gaze thoughtfully at the carpet to hide the satire of his eyes. In extreme cases he was seized by a sudden elaborate interest in his neglected cigar; turning it about and pondering it; perchance scraping the burnt end with the edge of a match and then, unless the stub proved to be hoplessly short and soggy, relighting it with meticulous fingers. His voice all the while applied similar treatment to dull interlocutors. They were not butts for his ridicule, they were beings to be relighted, if at all possible, with all possible patience.

That sort of person would often play up to him, praising his doctrines to his face, but then drawing narrow conclusions or adducing empty instances, prefaced maybe with a "Yes, Professor Babbitt, and don't you also think that" – etc.

"Uh – not precisely," he would respond and then proceed to formulate a scrupulous distinction. He had much to endure from such querists. Sometimes they forced him to laugh, but the laugh, even when behind their backs, was restrained and considerate. He wished not to damage any thread of conventional thought that had any validity to it. Such threads were the social warp, and he wished them, instead of being broken after the modernistic fashion, to be rewoven into a firmly modern pattern; particularly in America, where there was special opportunity for just such a pattern and special danger without it. "Pestiferous" was his word for American visionaries who naïvely echoed the subversive doctrines that had grown so noisy in older countries by way of reaction from old intrenched habits. Those doctrines when transferred into new and mobile America were, he often exclaimed, "thoroughly pestilential". He ridiculed the "imported notion" that the *chief* danger of modern America was moribund conventionalism. Radicals who cherished that notion stirred him to raucous mirth; which would subside into a gentle chuckling when his mind turned to the opposite sect, hidebound respectable persons. These pestered him considerably; but they were not "pestiferous".

"Of course," I heard him say more than once, before I noticed the same epigram in his writings, "where there is no vision the people perish, but where there is sham vision they perish even faster." Accordingly he attacked wrong visions rather than wrong actions. For him all conduct in the long run was the result of vision, of imaginatized ideas. The Great War was the foreseen result of certain bad ideas that he had been tracing down through the nineteenth century; and the course of the War interested him less than the course of those ideas. He was never tired of declaiming upon the unethical twist in the imagination of the time of Wordsworth, so fruitful, he thought, of ill results at the present day. But he poohpoohed the fuss that arose upon the discovery of that poet's liaison with Annette Vallon. Why refuse to recognize a malady in the plant and then get loudly excited over the withering of a petal? He was far more intolerant of warped ideas than of irregular conduct.

He was tolerant of Bohemian ways in persons who were at once sincere and large. Unable to conceive of himself as large, he wished to be socially regular, even personally unobstrusive; and perhaps he succeeded as well as nature would permit. In this connection I recall his first visit in my home when I subjected him, in right American fashion, to an overdose of entertainment. Between two sieges of company he informed me very brusquely that he was going for a solitary walk. As the time was short, the vicinity new to him, and his love of walking notorious, I warned him against straying too far. Rejecting the warning as entirely uncalled for, he turned his back and marched away. When, close upon dinner-time, he failed to reappear, I made search with an automobile in the gathering twilight and came upon him, not very far off, returning at hot-foot speed. With difficulty I persuaded him to get into the car. He was much annoyed at being mechanically retrieved, engined into a status of social delinquency. He laid claim to punctuality, arguing the point with Johnsonian sophistry.

In his later years his side face reminded me often of the miniature of Doctor Johnson made familiar to

Americans by Professor C. B. Tinker. But while highly admiring Johnson's character, Babbitt had no fond indulgence for his rude obtrusiveness, any more than he had for the subtler arrogance of his Victorian successor, the admirable Arnold. As for the moody egotism of minor British celebrities visiting in America, accentuated as it was by modern Bohemianism, he could ridicule it deliciously. He wished America to retain the moral robustness of the Anglo-Saxons while leaving behind their insular arrogancy. In social attitude we Americans could well take lessons, he would urge, from the French and the Chinese. He dubbed the Chinese "the English of the Orient" on account of their innate good sense, but he loved to enlarge upon the superiority of their religious tradition of good manners. He deplored the current decline in China of Confucian scholarship; he conferred much upon this matter with the Chinese students who came to work under him. The rehabilitation of China seemed to him an extremely important task for the sake, not just of that country, but of society at large.

His talk passed rapidly from land to land, from age to age, and from sage to sage. His listeners came to realize, far more vividly than those who knew him only in his writings, that here was a man who habitually thought of the world as a unit and of human history as a single world-wide process. American cosmopolitanism – a phrase which he disliked because of its cheap connotations – attained in him a high and firm level. It freed him from that deep-set European mentality which accentuates, even while trying to override, the line between East and West. It stationed his mind, as naturally as the American continent, between Europe and what Europe has termed "the far East". It enabled him to talk of Confucius and Buddha with the same unforced intimacy as of Aristotle and St. Paul. It freed him of course from nationalism, but not from nationality. Sentimental internationalism, especially the American brand, seemed to him an even greater danger than occidental jingoism. And he loved America with a love as deep and working as it was unproclaimed. Often after a loud-jibing pessimistic analysis of some or other American evil, he would lean his head towards me and say in a low tone, "But of course my hope for America is better than my words." And here let it be recorded that though he admired the French language, knew it thoroughly, and spoke it fluently, he spoke it ever with an accent that was nakedly Yankee and utterly unashamed.

He was American in his restless energy. His life was a restless campaign against American restlessness – a battling effort to turn our thinking towards the Supreme Peace. That paradox was vital, since fire when it is bad enough has to be fought with fire. Hence his unfailing devotion to Harvard University, even the modern Harvard, our leading American factory for mental mass-production. He himself was a distinguished product of that mill; distinguished, because from the outset the Buddha, instead of President Eliot, had played the dominant part in the shaping process. Babbitt once pointed out to me, with a mien of gratitude to fate, an avenue in the outskirts of Cambridge where as a young undergraduate he had been wont to trot back and forth holding a Pâli text to his eyes, learning its language and absorbing its lore while exercising his legs. "A running study of Buddha," I silently reflected; the still image of that sage arose in my mind, and I marvelled at the reincarnation of the ancient Hindu spirit in a current Harvard American. Reincarnation is not too strong a word, for Babbitt's beliefs came from within himself far more than from his studies. But this fact was unrecognized by him because (in addition to his humility) he was from first to last a Harvard scholar busily investigating innumerable texts. He documented his deepest insights as conscientiously as others cited authorities for the shallowest facts. He wanted the Higher Will to be as carefully researched as, let's say, the last will of Shakespeare. In his talk Harvardian scholasticism was satirized and defended with a quickness of alternation that disconcerted his listeners. Woe to them if their criticism of his university smacked of dilettantism, for this sin was worse in his eyes than the dryasdustiest pedantry. He shared, and strove to elevate, the Germanic energia of his Alma Mater. Harvard in his view was the main station for receiving and converting the electrical currents of American thought.

"What we need today in American crit'cism," I can still hear him saying in his clipped pronunciation, "is the historical tracing of great formative tendencies." America, now inundated with contemporaneity, must rediscover the noblest heights of thought in the past, the whole long past, Occidental and Oriental, of which she is the inheritor. Nor can those heights appear to us commandingly (so he would argue) unless our critical thinking sets itself sharply against the errors of modern naturalism, to which American civilization, so largely a creature of the modern age, is peculiarly exposed. In other words the modern American critic, if he is to build firmly, must also firmly destroy. This point he pressed upon me in the earlier days of our acquaintance when he still had hope that I too would be warlike. Once, after a long dispute, he fell silent for a while, then thrust his head towards me and said in a grimly humorous tone, "At least it seems that you and I agree that what America needs today is a new deal in ideas?"

"Very true."

"Well, then," he exclaimed loudly, shaking his fist at things in general – and in that moment I felt like a thing in general – "why don't you get out and fight?" These words were uttered with an inward, mounting forcefulness that cannot be put on to paper. After many years, I hear an eternal echo, "get-out-and-FIGHT".

His talk forced younger academics to face their danger of yielding to the American lust for being in the swim. They might easily and insensibly lower their standards while disguising this weakness under a benevolent desire to encourage contemporary art and letters in America. But surely, his listener would urge, such encouragement is needed: we must have a native literature. He would reply satirically that our journalists could be trusted to flatter all that was second-rate in American "creative" writing. The function of the teacher and academic critic was to prepare the way for a first-rate American art to come. This could be done only by placing the emphasis on sound ideas and high standards – not on art for art's sake, not on what Babbitt called "the merely lit'r'y aspects".

His personal lack of interest in current imaginative writings was well-nigh complete. His chief recreation in solitude was the reading of classic passages of poetry and prose in various languages, above all the Greek. One day when he was on the point of setting out for a badly needed vacation in Europe, he confided to me that the finest pleasure that he proposed for himself over there, was a rereading of Sophocles while strolling upon the Acropolis. He made this confession shyly, glancing sideways at me to see if its touch of romantic-classical sentiment would bring a smile to my lips. But I could not smile: I was seeing two moving pictures – one of a cantering youth engrossed in the aphorisms of Buddha in the outskirts of flat Cambridge; the other, of an elderly and overworked scholar pondering high Greek drama among the ruins on the sacred Athenian hill. . . . Leisure for him was a change of mental work. He would laugh derisively when informed that such and such a professor of literature was accustomed at times to regale himself with detective stories. He interrogated me upon my lighter reading and chuckled immensely over some of the items I confessed. "But," I declared, "one cannot be always occupied with the grand old masters and the bards sublime. You, when you are utterly fagged after a day's work – what do you read then?"

"Contemp'r'y crit'c'sm," he replied simply. And indeed he had an amazing acquaintance with that field. He perused it at once for amusement and for refutation. Often he would snatch up from his table some brand new critical book or article, read aloud to me its most wrong-headed passage, and then define the particular brand of Romanticism or Naturalism represented by the author. I averred maliciously that it was a waste of time to read such ephemeral stuff, that it ought to be allowed to die a natural death: why throw harpoons at sky-rockets? By way of reply he threw several at me. Those "skyrockets", he asserted, could dazzle and mislead a great many readers, particularly in America where the reading public was extraordinarily naïve. Surely, then, an American critic, if he was in earnest, should attack current critical errors instead of waiting for them to die or, rather – unlike "skyrockets", this being a false metaphor – to take root in the soil.

"A critic," he said, "must understand his function. He dare not aim at future readers. Of course any writer who is worth his salt hopes to be read after his death. But it is the critic's business to grapple with the age in which he lives and give it what he sees it needs."

"Very well," I said, "but some of us wish that you would write one book, just one, in which, laying aside your critico-historical methods – omitting all reference to the works of others – you would give your message in a direct, personal manner."

He stared at me and laughed. "You'd like me to essay the rôle of prophet or confessor?"

"Not exactly, but – "

"We have too many prophets and confessors already; that is just the trouble with the modern age. No, no," he concluded with sharp finality of tone, "my critical function is a humble one but, I believe, necessary."

Sometimes, as I have just suggested, Babbitt would override or sidestep an objection; and then one would reflect how extraordinary it was that he did not do so oftener, considering his pugnacity. His principle – not consistently followed, else he had been unhuman – was *not* to "talk for victory", that is for personal triumph. He would not use his power of wit crushingly if he perceived that his questioner was impersonally seeking truth, however much at his expense. He would submit patiently to gruelling cross-examinations upon dubious passages in his writings; and in the end he would often say mildly, "I shall try to make that matter clearer in my next book." More often, however, he would respond with questions that led his questioner into a Socratic trap. As for trapping him, that was an Herculean labor. Only once in the whole course of our conversations do I recall his being nonplussed. He had been inveighing against the many who employ the slogan of "service to mankind" to advance their own selfish interests. I remarked, with studied seriousness, "As a rule you insist on a very discriminating use of categorical terms, such as 'humanist' – "

"Yes, yes?"

"But just now you have employed the term 'humanitarian' very indiscriminately." I repeated some of his assertions.

"Ye-e-es", he replied slowly, "yes, that is so." Then he went on with a rush, "But they happen to be my chief aversion, I simply cannot stand them – the humanitarian boosters." His right hand performed an orbit of comprehensive denunciation; his tone was almost a bark. "Cerberus," I murmured at him and he was mildly amused. He was richly amused by the vivid invections of H. L. Mencken against the American booster. He would quote them with delight; then proceed to criticize that writer's *Weltanschauung*; and then, mayhap, cite one of Mencken's clever thrusts at Professor Babbitt.

He could laugh at himself with entire lack of constraint, with a serene gleam in his eyes that played upon himself as one of the transient Many. I recall his mirth when there came to his ears the following local witticism upon his local status: "Babbitt's fame is going round the world, it has already left Cambridge." I remember when he repeated, chuckling, a journalist's word-picture of him searching spinsterishly under his bed each night for Rousseau. One day I came across him after his return from a large Phi Beta Kappa gathering in another city, where he and a certain prominent university president had been the only speakers. The president, of course, spoke first, taking for his subject "The Value of Ideals". This, Babbitt told me, was a trifle embarrassing since his own address was to be on "The Value of Standards as Opposed to Ideals". But he had proceeded to deliver it without any modifications. The humor with which he recounted the episode was entirely impartial; it placed the two discordant orators in the same box. I wondered just how the prominent university president felt while listening to the second speaker; but Babbitt refused to wonder.

He had small interest in the art of conciliation; he did not like it practised on him and would not practise it on others. Caring as little for its twin, the art of correspondence — letters are a kind of "conciliation" (literally, a drawing together) — he made his letters as few and brief as possible, claiming that this was for him a necessary way of saving time. An old friend to whom he had occasion to forward annually a sum of money complained, "I get no word from you except the Inner Check." Not so humorous and indulgent were other would-be correspondents. As his fame increased they poured in upon him an increasing stream of mail and did not relish receving few or no words in reply. Babbitt wished his admirers to correspond with his ideas rather than with him. Once he showed me an engaging missive which I urged him to answer at once. It was from a budding critic who seemed to me exceptionally gifted and who certainly evinced an ardent interest in Babbitt and his ideas. Later on, I was astonished to come across in print a warm attack upon those very ideas by the selfsame writer. I asked Babbitt just what he had written in answer to the young man's letter. "Nothing," he replied coolly, "I did not find the time." He laughed at my blank look. But I, quoting Emerson's epigram "In youth we are mad for persons", urged that young people normally come to truth through an interest in persons who have it, an interest that should not be discouraged. He rejoined, it was equally obvious that a young man was not on the way to becoming a worthwhile critic if his interest in sound ideas could be easily discouraged and if he persisted in maintaining a youthful disposition to be mad for persons, or at them.

Persons and ideas were sharply distinguished in Babbitt's mind. Often one heard him denounce a man's ideas while expressing a sincere regard for the man himself. This attitude was inadequtely reciprocated by his colleagues in academe. When their personal interests were grazed by his heavy impersonal tread they were apt to discount him by declaring that he lacked the true professorial balance: preacher rather than scholar, he properly belonged outside the academic pale. At the same time, comically enough, he was being hotly consigned to the *inside* of that pale by his journalistic opponents: for them he was a dangerous incarnation of the essence of professorialism. And surely their instinct was the right one. Babbitt was turning a high-pressure hose (such was the picture that came to my mind) upon incendiary notions that threatened the very citadel of accademia — while other academics, upon whose toes he had trodden *en route* to the fire, complained that his way of holding the nozzle was quite unacademic. "Babbitt," I heard Professor X assert, "is a mere propagandist." The hiss with which the "ist" was uttered seemed to me unnatural, till I learned later that Babbitt was known to have remarked that X's ideas were "critically negligible". More than once, however, I heard Babbitt praise X highly for character and ability. Indeed, undervaluating his own talents, he was apt to overestimate those of other persons; especially in the case of his friends. He had a genius for friendship. Greatly occupied as he was, he would go out of his way to serve the interests of friends who did not do the like for him.

Unfortunately, at least from the contemporary standpoint, his personal generosity was not so apparent in his writings since there he was preoccupied with ideas and tendencies. In conversation he could praise discerningly the charms and incidental insights not only of J. J. Rousseau but of present-day "naturists". When he took pen in hand, however, all other considerations were overshadowed by his conviction that the central tendency of these writers was fatefully wrong. I was disturbed by his very sharp review of a certain popular and rather distinguished book on morals. His handling of it, I told him, was plainly lopsided and had doubtless resulted in the addition of a new battalion to his large army of enemies. He replied that the book was fundamentally wrong, built upon a confusion of humanism and stoicism; and that this fact, ignored by other reviewers, had to be emphasized by him. I retorted that he himself had ignored several good points in the book; for instance, the exceptionally sensible treatment of sex.

"A sound treatment of sex," Babbitt rejoined severely, "requires a religious background which this author does not possess. At this point, at least, I seem to put more emphasis on religion than you do." (I had recently been accusing him of not giving religion its due.) Presently he called my attention to a new work which, unlike the one just mentioned, he heartily approved of. In reading it I soon discovered that the writer had liberally helped himself to Babbitt's philosophy without once mentioning his name. I said to him ironically, "This work would naturally interest you, its ideas are your own – in disguise."

"I did not look at the matter that way," he replied with entire simplicity. "My impression is that this writer is one who thinks things out for himself." He added that, on account of his unpopularity with the reviewers, new authors who were in favor of humanistic ideas could get a better hearing if they refrained from bringing in his name. That, he said, employing one of his favorite military metaphors — that was "good tactics". On the same grounds, those who showed intentions of dedicating books to him, he urged not to do so. Even a group of his former students who planned, in accordance with a pleasant academic custom, to produce a symposium in his honor, relinquished their purpose, so unmistakably sincere was his disapproval of it.

No doubt his rare disinterestedness was favored by his rare defect of the artistic temperament; he was not a thin-skinned person. But he was far from impassible; and the accumulated hostility aroused by his lifework was not an easy burden for him in his last years. "Fighting a whole generation," he remarked to me in an intimate moment, "is not exactly a happy task." He added somberly, "I have had to live at a time when all the ideas which I know to be most vital for man have more and more declined." He could not see, because of his essential modesty, that his own case was a powerful instance to the contrary. I spoke of his influence, asserting that it had seeped further and deeper than appeared. But he discounted it heavily, repeating my word "seep" with a scornful grunt. Not seeping but rousing to battle was the effect he aimed at. The time was one of great human crisis: the enemy truly were plenteous, but humanistic fighters were few. In short, he wanted more Irving Babbitts — not realizing how difficult he was for Providence to duplicate — and he was distressed by their persistent refusal to appear. He had an increasing sense of loneliness in his warfare. When our walk one day took us near a cemetery he waved a finger at it and muttered with dark satisfaction, "That puts a man in mind of his rest."

Such somber notes, however, were utterly exceptional. His talk and, I am sure, his thoughts were seldom concerned with his own career. Yet the more closely one came to know him, the more one could see that he had a large capacity for personal ambition and for all the feelings, good and ill, that attend it. But one perceived at the same time that he was vigilantly at work subduing his personal desires to the "Higher Will". His incessant "inner working" was never on display; it was veiled from others by the steady cheerfulness to which it gave rise; and it was veiled from himself, so to speak, by the steady humility which gave rise to it. Never in our most intimate talks did he allude confessionally to his own spiritual efforts: I saw that he regarded them as, essentially, not his own. He looked in with humility – even while looking out with pride. He had the natural self-pride of a man of strong feelings strongly under control, a pride sometimes touched with harsh scorn of human follies and weaknesses. But the scorn was momentary, and the pride was overshadowed by his high reverence for the unseen Law. That supernatural Law and Will (for it was both of these at once) became for him in his later years ever more of a real presence. During one of our last walks, his mind dwelt exceptionally upon the old theme of human transience; till finally he exclaimed, with bent head and raised hand, with a depth of simple awe, entirely devoid of any note of fatalism or personal mournfulness, "Oh, God is very great and a man is a worm."

After a silence, I said, "But the God whom men worship is not just a Will, as in your writings, but a Being, a complete Being, who – "

"Yes, yes," he broke in with humorous impatience, "but that is beyond my province as a writer. Why do you keep wishing me to be a theologian? I am merely a critic." And surely (he proceeded) the critical point in regard to religion, especially today, was that divine reality, whatever else it might be, could not be real to men unless they found it at work in themselves as a Will commanding their own wills. . . . He spoke impersonally, with profound personal conviction. "Merely a critic", he called himself; he never knew how much more than a critic he was; and that unawareness was part of his great dedication. He would be much abashed, he would rebuke me severely, if he knew that, as I reflect upon him, I recall the parable of the man to whom the Master of the Feast said, "Friend, go up higher."

Chaucer's Boëthius

W. P. WITCUTT

IF IT be true that civilizations move in somewhat analogous cycles, each with its birth, its time of flowering, its overripeness, and its decay, then we have not yet reached the time of Boëthius. For he was essentially one who stood between new things and old; and this, as has been well said, is aptly symbolized in his actual life and misfortune – the Greek philosopher imprisoned by a barbarian king. We have not yet reached the stage when European and American civilization shows imminent signs of dissolution. If that stage is reached soon, we shall have no Boëthius; for we have no tradition to be passed on to a culture yet unborn. Scraps of scientific knowledge; a literature; the memory of a great material achievement – these will be passed on. But there will be something essentially lacking; something we do not possess; without which it will be impossible for another culture to arise. That something is a philosophy; or to speak more correctly, a philosophical tradition.

At the back of every culture lies a Tradition – an intellectual structure that gives purpose to life. We are living on the credit of a Tradition we have abandoned – the double tradition of the Greek philosophy and the Christian religion.

Boëthius was one of the formers of the Tradition; more from the purely philosophical than the theological aspect; though this point must not be overstressed. Without the Christian religion Boëthius' philosophy would not have been such a clear-cut and simple engine of thought. More of Neo-Platonist confusion would have entered into it. Nevertheless, Christianity had a purely negative or ascetic effect upon it. It is philosophy, not theology.

It can be defined as "essence of philosophy". It is neither Platonic nor Aristotelian. Even a Stoic could have used it. The philosophy of the *De Consolatione* is a framework – the concentrated essence of the Greek philosophical tradition. It is the crystallization of the inherited wisdom of centuries. Together with the original Aristotle, and the transmitted Platonism of St. Augustine and Dionysius, it enters as one of the primary ingredients into the great Thomistic synthesis. One can easily discern it in the *Contra Gentiles*.

It has been translated twice into the English language by two masters of their tongue; by Alfred into the now unreadable Anglo-Saxon of the Wessex Court; and by Chaucer.

It is important to grasp the fact that Alfred and Chaucer knew and appreciated this intellectual product of a mature civilization. The moderns are apt to think that they have discovered all the problems that to them make belief impossible.

The traditionalist must blow this nonsense to pieces. It may humiliate the modern to discover that King Alfred (of all people) and Chaucer knew of and faced the alternative to belief in God – our "Darwinian" chance; or that it was no news to them that this world was not the center of the universe, but an insignificant planet, set in the vastness of space. The humiliation is necessary.

Boëthius' book deals with the question – there can be no greater – of the End of Man. Each of the false ends is examined and set aside; until the true End is at last discovered. It is of the stuff of poetry. A large proportion of the book is in fact poetry. The argument moves gravely from point to point; and between the stages Boëthius interposes a "meter", in which the subject-matter of the preceding "prose" is dealt with afresh, no longer from the purely philosophical point of view, but from the viewpoint of poetry – from the aspect, that is to say, of thought and emotion, instead of thought alone.

The proper medium in which an English-speaking man should read Boëthius is the Chaucerian translation. The *De Consolatione* will then appear not as something foreign and remote, but as it really is – something that belongs to *us*, something that is ours.

" 'Whether weenest thou,' quoth she, 'that this world be governed by foolish haps and fortunous, or else that there be in it any government of reason?'

" 'Certes,' quoth I, 'I trow not in no manner, that so certain things should be moved by fortunous fortune; but I wot well that God, Maker and Master, is governor of His work. Nor ever will be day that night put me out of the soothness of that sentence.' "*

It is the recognition of the alternative to God, and its steadfast rejection. Our ancestors were not fools; nor, on the other hand, are the modern substitutes for God new. Evolution, chance, "foolish haps and fortunous" – it is all the same thing. Boëthius and Chaucer were faced with the same alternatives as face Bertrand Russell or Julian Huxley; but their clear intellects saw which alternative to choose.

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* The spelling is somewhat modernized.

"For if thou remember of what country thou art born, it is not governed by emperors, nor by government of multitude, as were the countries of them of Athens, but one lord and one king, and that is God, that is lord of thy country."

We gain nothing by being born later in time.

There is really only one serious objection to the thesis of the existence of God; it is that which St. Thomas places first in the second article of the *Summa*. It is the problem dealt with by the Book of Job and by Psalms XXXVIII and XXXIX – the problem of the existence of evil.

"O thou maker of the wheel that beareth the stars, which are y-fastened to thy perdurable chair, and turnest the heaven with a ravishing suay, and constrainest the stars to suffer thy law," cries Boëthius through the mouth of Chaucer; how is it that the wicked flourish, "and folk of wicked manners sitten in high chairs?"

The question is not answered immediately. First there is enacted an immense drama – the procession of false ends. The connection is not at once apparent. It will be seen later.

The first of the false ends is Riches. And by riches Boëthius means not the sad-colored End of the modern world – "maximum production", as the jargon of the econmists has it; but riches really worth having – jewels and lands.

Such things are good in themselves – gems "draw to themselves a little of the last beauty of the world". Fields, too, are beautiful. "And right so been we gladded sometime of the face of the sea when it is clear; and also marwailen we on the heaven and on the stars, and on the sun and on the moon." And yet, "appartaineth any of thilke things to thee"?

A very little suffices for man. "And if thou wilt fulfill thy need after that it suffiseth to nature, then it is no need that thou seek after the superfluity of fortune."

Boëthius shows his Distributist predispositions as clearly as Martial or St. Thomas.

"O straight and needy clepe I this richesse, sin that many folk ne may not have it all, ne all may it not comen to one man withouten poverty of all other folk." There is an almost identical sentence in the *Summa.*

Property is for the normal man an essential of happiness. "Certes, there is no other thing that may well perform blissfulness, as an estate plenteous of all goods, that ne hath need of none other thing, but that is sufficient of itself unto itself." But any superfluity above that which is necessary entangles the soul. And Boëthius sings the praises of the ages before men discovered riches. He was not afraid to lay himself open to the charge of "primitivism".

Felix nimium prior aetas. . . .

On the lips of Chaucer his song becomes transmuted from the style of Horace to that of Geoffrey de Mandeville.

Non Bacchica munera norant
Liquido confundere melle,
Nec lucida uellere Serum
Tyrio miscere ueneno

becomes:

"They ne could not medley the gift of Bacchus to the clear honey; that is to seyn, they could make no pigment nor clarree; ne they could not medley the bright fleeces of the country of Seriens with the venom of Tyrie; that is to seyn, they could not dyen white fleeces of Serien country with the blood of a manner shell-fish that men finden in Tyrie, with which blood men dyen purple."

Saeuior ignibus Aetnae
Feruens amor ardet habendi,

concludes Boëthius, which Chaucer renders:

"The anguishous love of having burneth in folk more cruelly than the fire of the mountain Ethna, that aye burneth."

Next of the false ends comes Power. After all, what is Power? "Mayst thou have any commandment over a free courage? Mayst thou remove from the state of its proper rest a thought that is cleaving together by steadfast reason?" None can exercise power over men's thoughts. The tyrants of Boëthian and Chaucerian days had not foreseen mass-suggestion.

Next comes Fame. It is a fragile thing. "How many a man, that was full noble in his time, hath the wreched and needy forgetting of writers put out of mind and done away! Albeit so that, certes, thilke writings profit little; the which writings long and dark eld doth away, both them and their authors."

Even though the noise of a man's name should run through the world, "certain thing it is, as thou has learned by the demonstration of astronomy, that all the environing of the earth about ne hath but the reason of a prick at regard of the greatness of heaven;

that is to seyn, that if there were made comparison of the earth to the greatness of heaven, men would judge in all, that the earth ne held no space. . . . And ye then, that be environed and closed in the least prick of thilke prick, thinken ye to manifesten your renown and don your name to been born forth?"

It is the famous Copernican argument, dear to Modernist theologians; who use it to prove that the Incarnation has become inconceivable. We know now that the earth is not the center of the universe, but only an insignificant planet in one corner, runs the argument. Boëthius and Chaucer would have quite admitted the fact. Where we live is "the leste prikke of thilke prikke", says the latter; "*minimi puncti quodam puncto*", agrees the former.

The fourth of the false ends is Pleasure. "And many folk measuren and guessen that sovereign good be joy and gladness, and weenen that it be right blissful thing to plungen them in voluptuous delight."

One is always surprised at the modernity of Boëthius. After the supporters of Industrialism come the neo-pagans.

Pleasure is a distinct thing from happiness. Pleasure is a thing we have in common with the beasts. "And if thilke delights maken folk blissful, then by the same cause must thilke beastès be cleped blissful; of which beastès all the intention hasteth to fulfill their bodily jollity."

Bodily beauty is not an end. "The shining of thy form, that is to seyn, the beauty of thy body, how swiftly passing it is and how transitory; certes, it is more flitting than the mutability of flowers of the summer-season."

Here Philosophy turns aside to consider Friendship, but places this on a higher level than the other goods. Friendship "ne sholden be reckoned among the goods of fortune, but of virtue; for it is a full holy manner thing".

All these things – wealth, power, fame, pleasure, beauty – are not to be despised but used aright, as Aristotle's Magnanimous Man uses fame rightly, as means and not as ends. They are all used by Providence.

Hanc rerum seriem ligat
Terras ac pelagus regens,
Et caelo imperitans amor.

"All this accordance of things is bounden with Love, that governeth earth and sea, and hath also commandments to the heavens."

The false ends being rejected, Philosophy undertakes to show Boëthius the "Very Blissfulness" or "true happiness".

Happiness is the true end of man, not "richesse", "right digne of reverence", "right high power", a "joy and gladness".

Somehow the Chaucerian names of the false ends seem to give them a greater content than our modern names do. "Richesse" gives us the impression, not of factories and furtively rich men ill at ease in their high-powered cars, but of silks and furs, and proud be-gemmed burgesses. "Right high power" goes by with a blast of trumpets. "Joy and gladness" makes one think of May-time and dancing. Even if these are false ends, they have a greater attractiveness than their modern equivalents.

The "Very Wealfulness" – man's true happiness – is God.

"Thou that art alder-fairest, bearing the fair world in thy thought."

> *Tu cuncta superno*
> *Ducis al exemplo pulchrum pulcherrimus ipse*
> *Mundum mente gerens.*

"For thou art clearness; thou art peaceable rest to debonair folk; thou thyself art beginning, leader, path, and term; to look on thee, that is our end."

> *Atque tuo splendore mica: tu namque serenum,*
> *Tu requies tranquilla piis; te cernere finis,*
> *Principium, uector, dux, semita, terminus idem.*

"Blessed is the man that may seen the clear well of Good."

Now the answer to the problem of evil is indicated. For only the good gain the true Good, while the wicked gain only false goods.

"God, when he hath beholden from the high tower of his purveaunce, he knoweth what is convenable to every wight, and lendeth him that he is not convenable to him." Some, whom adversity might imperil, are spared earthly sorrow. Others "God leadeth into experience of Himself by aspre and sorrowful things". Others again are chastened in order to give examples of virtue not overcome by adversity. Bad men are often given earthly pleasure, so that good men may despise it.

From this point Boëthius goes on to discuss the entangled question of God's foreknowledge and man's free will. We shall not follow him. We shall only agree with him that "the thought of man, confounded and overthroun by the dark members of the body, ne may not, by fire of its darkened looking . . . know the thin knittings of things".

Perhaps our children will return to the high sanity of Boëthius, and drink from the well at which Chaucer drank. Perhaps the book and the translation will be read when the books of the modern prophets have long since been done away with by long and dark eld, both them and their authors. At least we hope so.

Property and Catholic Morals

ERIC GILL

"THE *restoration of liberty by the distribution of property!*" The full meaning of these phrases is beyond exposition, but a piercing ray is thrown on the idea of property by a consideration of the nature of human personality. Christians have always defended private property as a natural human right. Popes have thundered from Vatican Olympia. The clergy, bishops even, have more or less timidly echoed papal thunders. The anti-communist cry has rattled round the sultry sky of modern politics, and because the lightning and the thunder came from Rome, from the Church, it has, by a natural association of ideas, seemed to be primarily a moral question. The human right to private property seemed to be, was assumed to be, a moral right; and the clergy, in their fulminations against communism, seemed to make it simply a matter of morals, a matter of good will against bad will, good men against bad, the defense of morality against thieves and robbers, of potentially noble and public-spirited owners of property against greedy and self-seeking agitators and wreckers of the state. Thus it has come about that the clergy and even the Church herself, seem to side with injustice against the obviously just claims of a multitude "broken down and powerless" (we heard recently of an episcopal statement to the effect that papal social encyclicals do not apply to England because "things are so well run here"), and thus it comes about that the last institution the broken and the powerless look to for redress of their grievances is the Holy Roman Church, and the parish clergy are everywhere assumed to side with "big business" and the capitalist exploiters of human misery. For the clergy in their rectories and presbyteries never experience the life of the factory or the mine. They have little knowledge or experience of serving behind counters or in counting houses and warehouses. They have seldom risen from the ranks of porters, truck-drivers, or bus-conductors. They know of such things only as consumers, members of "the public"; or they hear of them only when they visit the wives and mothers, and then, such is our traditional respect for our pastors, only in vague commonplaces accompanied by "yes, father" and "no, father".

The clergy are everywhere acknowledged to be custodians of faith and morals — faith is what you more or less blindly believe because your school teachers taught it during "religious instruction", and morals are little more than a list of things you mustn't do. Man as an intelligent and intellectual being is hardly mentioned, and never expected to function. Obedience is the only virtue inculcated by parish visiting. So when a matter like the ownership of property comes to the fore, the clergy and their flocks assume it to be simply a matter of morals. The possession of private property is "a natural human right", they say, and all the emphasis is laid on the word "right" and the word right seems to have none but a moral connotation. Right and wrong, that is: in obedience to the seventh commandment (Anglican, the sixth) or flouting it. The words "natural" and "human" are not considered or analyzed. The right to property is assumed to be a thing good men believe in and bad men deny, and that's all about it. If you inquire, the most you will be told is, perhaps, that Pope Leo XIII, echoing St. Thomas Aquinas, says that the reason behind the doctrine of private property is simply that men tend to look after that which is their own better than that which is owned in common or by the community.

Now this is very well and, as far as it goes, perfectly right and proper and correct according to the textbooks. But still communism grows, and still the distrust of the Church and of the clergy grows. We can no longer ignore this distrust or count it as meaning no more than a sign of a desperate wickedness. We must account for it, counter it, or succumb to it. The question is: why do the workers hate and distrust the clergy? And further, what makes them take it for granted that the Church is against them? The answer is easy. The workers hate the clergy and take it for granted that the Church is against them because the clergy (exceptions admitted) have not realized that the kind of world they legislate for is gone. Their politics does not apply to the world of industrial capitalism. In that world the institution of private property has been destroyed. Whether they or we like it or not the ordinary man does not own property – at the best he has a few dollars in the Savings Bank. The ordinary man is not the owner of anything but his own body – a proletarian who can no longer claim ownership even over his own children. He is a "hand", a tool, a tooth on the wheels of some gigantic and inhuman machine – literally the servant of machines and, in effect, a machine himself, a sentient part of the machinery. And the concern which employs him, however much it may be true that the "profits" (according to the jargon of those who keep accounts) are the private property of those who put up the capital – the concern is not that old-fashioned kind of thing in which a person called "the boss" renders a personal service to his fellow men, men known to him personally, but is in most cases a joint-stock limited-liability company of which the best that can be said is that it is a public service when it is not a public robbery. To be an employee of the London, Midland & Scottish Railway Company, for instance, is not to be in private employment. How then can the L.M.S. claim to be private property? Such employment is as much public service as is that offered by the Post Office or the War Department. And when the directors make speeches, at annual meetings of shareholders or elsewhere, they are proud to say so.*

The state of affairs which we now enjoy is the product of several centuries of "progress". Good or bad, this progress has not been opposed by the clergy. They, like most people, especially of the business classes, have accepted without demur the dope that the progression from man-made to machine-made, from small workshops to large combines of limited-liability companies, is all in the scheme of divine providence. The civilization, and that is to say the townization, of Europe and America, the British colonies and Japan, is regarded, as much by the clergy as by everyone else, as a mark of God's favor to God-fearing nations. But the consequences have not been observed. The logic of the development has not been accepted. We have created vast public services in place of innumerable private businesses, giant factories in place of small workshops, the impersonal service of machines in place of responsible human artistry, and we think it possible to apply the principles of private property to institutions of which the only privacies are the dividends. The workers, "broken down and powerless", are more logical. They, like the clergy, have accepted the machine and the impersonal company; but, unlike the clergy, they accept the consequences. If, they say, the necessaries of human life are to be provided as public services, let them be organized and honored as such, and let the profits be public profits. It was all very well for mediaeval barons to maintain their power by the strength of their own swords. It is quite another thing, and a thing in no way venerable, for modern financiers to hide behind the police and the soldiery to maintain a purely economic tyranny. In these circumstances the notion of private property as a moral right is obviously absurd; and, if morals are its only ground, nothing can save private property.

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* The fact that trades unionism has been sanctioned by national governments is sufficient in itself to show that the worker's conditions and wages are no longer a matter of private bargaining between him and his master. The public nature of industrial work is recognized.

This is precisely where Catholics have up to the present made the mistake. They have sought to defend private property by the very arguments which are their enemies' strongest line of attack. They have used the moral argument, when it is precisely the moral argument which does not apply; or rather, they have used the moral argument, when it is precisely the moral argument which is against them! Man's right to private property is not primarily a moral right. It is not as a moral being that he claims ownership or can claim it. As a moral being private ownership is exactly the one thing he cannot claim. For "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof", and the earth is God's gift to man for the use and sustenance of all men. How often, unnoticed by us or by our pastors, have learned philosophers and theologians repeated this fact and explored its implications. There shall be "individual appropriation and public use", they have said, and we have done our best to destroy both. In our vast undertakings we have reduced individual appropriation to a minimum and we have heaped the highest honors upon those who most cunningly accumulated private fortunes. Our rich men, our lords and marquises, are not our kings and soldiers, but those who by unscrupulous machinations sequester to themselves the profits of trading in oil and soap and newspapers.

"Public property" we understand, communists and socialists and fascists see that we do not forget it. But what is individual appropriation? It is here that we have been in error and it is here that we shall find our strength. The root of our error has been in supposing that man's right to individual appropriation was a moral one. That was the trouble. For man's soul is not only a will but an intelligence also. It is his intelligence that we have forgotten. *It is by reason of his intellectual nature, not of his morality, that man may and must make claim to individual ownership.* We have, in our pride, sought a moral right to enjoyment where we had no such right; and we have foregone an intellectual right as workmen, where it was necessary for the good of things themselves. It is for the good of the property itself that "as many as possible shall be encouraged to become owners". It is as artists, in the proper and broad sense of the word as used by the philosopher, it is as responsible workmen, that men must own; for it is only as owners that they can do to things as they should be done by, and that, and that alone, is the ground upon which it is said that men tend to look after their own property better than that which is owned in common. For it is not a matter of morals, as who should say, the hireling has no care for the sheep because, being a hireling he is a *bad* man; but because, being a hireling, he has not the necessary responsibility as artist, as workman (not his to decide when and how to shear, when to put the ram to the ewes, or to buy and sell). So it is also with the tenant farmer. Unless the terms of his tenancy approach nearly to the conditions of ownership, it is not humanly possible for him to manipulate his farm according to his own notions as a responsible workman, an artist. It is the same with all other human affairs and doings. In every case ownership is necessary *for the good of the work to be done*, and if the work be done well the whole community will benefit.

It is therefore the fact of manipulation (that is the key word here) *that gives man his claim to ownership*. For, unlike the beasts who may eat grass or devour one another, nothing that man needs but must suffer his manipulation to bring it into service. That is the inexorable ruling of Providence. So He has made us, so He has made the world.

A very little consideration will suffice to show that it is in the order of *making* that ownership, individual appropriation, becomes necessary. How can a man make it if he cannot control the material of which things are made? How can he control the material if he have no rights over it? How can he make things well if he have no responsibility for so doing, and how can he maintain his responsibility if the material to be worked upon and manipulated be not his own but another's? It is because of the necessity of manipulation, without which no natural product is of service to man, that there is the necessity of private ownership. And it is because the service of men implies good service and not bad that an artistic problem merges into and becomes a problem of morals. It is immoral to deprive men of what they need. Men need goods, but in order that goods be made well there must be individual appropriation of the means of production. It is thus that the denial of private property becomes a breach of morals. But the immorality is not due to any direct injustice or lack of charity but indirectly, because while in the order of *doing*, of prudence, of service to one another, the use of things should be in common, in the order of *making*, and for the sake of the good of the things made, ownership must be private. Where there is no private ownership in the means of production there is injustice, and therefore a breach of the moral law, because the quality of things made or of services rendered is reduced and men are deprived of what is due to them.

Such then is the true and firm ground upon which we base a claim to private property; and, it is clear, this claim is precisely the opposite of that of the socialists and communists. For whereas the communists demand the nationalization of the means of production, but do not wish to deprive men of the private use of things (you may have private use of tooth picks and even of houses in communist Russia) so that it may be said that *they demand public ownership for the sake of private use*, we, that is to say the Church, by the mouths of her accredited philosophers and theologians, say precisely the opposite.

We demand private ownership of the means of production for the sake of the public use of the things made. The private ownership is not demanded on the selfish ground of private enjoyment but for the sake of the good of things to be made and in order that the public use which morality demands, may be a use of good things. There is no moral right to private property except in view of the fact that, though the formal object of art is the good of the work to be done, *the artist or workman is a man and it is a man's work that he must do.* Thus, though the right of ownership derives in the first place from the necessity of manipulation, the *use* of property is also a moral act which, as such, must somehow regard the good of all – in the first place my own good of course, but my good as a member of the community.

Such is Christianity, such is the teaching of the Church.* It is commonly forgotten.

* "He that stole, let him steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that we may have something to give to him that suffereth need."–*Ephesians, 4, 28.* "If the question be asked, How must one's possessions be used? the Church replies without hesitation: Man should not consider his material possessions as his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without hesitation when others are in need."–*Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum.*

Neither the clergy nor the laity today are aware of the primary reasons upon which the claim to private property rests. According to ordinary conversation and pulpit exhortations there appears to be no difference between the claims of the capitalists and those of Catholics. We are for the most part as greedy and grasping as any man of business or manufacturer. A certain degree of voluntary "charity" and alms-giving mitigates our acquisitiveness, but it only mitigates it; it does not imply any radically different standpoint or ground of argument.

But forgetfulness is almost inevitable in these days. Corrupted by five centuries of commercial rule and by the consequent enormous development of material means, the idea of human work has become an idea having no associations with anything but money in the first place, and, as an afterthought and an excuse, the moral duty of provision for physical needs. The fine arts themselves, those by which paintings and sculptures, architecture and music and poetry are provided, have now no significance but that of ostentation on the one hand and private delectation on the other. Town halls and even churches display no more than a wish to stand well before our fellow men, and paintings and music and sculptures display no more than the private fancies and dream phantasias of individual artists. As to the common arts by means of which the common necessities of human life are provided – these have now all been submerged in the mechanical system of our international money-lenders. The human responsibility of the workman – to bake bread or make chairs and tables, clothes and houses, according to his own idea of what is good in such things — has been universally destroyed. It is no longer asked of the workman or even remembered by him. In such a world, a world of factories and machines, of companies using millions of capital and employing men by the thousand, there can no longer be any private property in the means of production or any desire for it. Those Catholics who think that they can stem the tide of communism by talking about "natural human rights" are merely distributing hot air unless, at the same time, they admit and proclaim that the whole fabric of our industrial, mass-producing, machine-using, civilization is based upon unchristian and anti-Christian assumptions. For the "natural human rights" we talk about are not rights to private property as such, but to the responsible use of our faculties of intelligence and good will. It is those faculties which demand private property for their support. It is those faculties which are necessary to salvation. It is those faculties which our present civilization flouts and corrupts and destroys.

In our degraded state work has been degraded — what need is there, then, to own your workshop? What possible appetite for private ownership can any factory hand or bank clerk or shop assistant be expected or even encouraged to have?

And another and ultimately more important reason for individual appropriation of the means of production — so important as completely to obliterate any other — is the fact that only when men own the means of making is it possible for work to be what it is meant to be, the praise of God, a song of praise, a sacrifice of praise. Praise is its only real and enduring reason of being, and, to that end, much more than to the end of human service, individual appropriation of the means of production is necessary.

We said that when the quality of things is neglected men are deprived of good things and injustice is done because men are deprived of what is due to them. But this debt is not incurred because men are good and so deserve good things but because *man* is good, created in the image of God; and precisely as the farmer knows that beasts need good food and the land good manure, so man himself needs good things. We may now say more. The debt is paid to man and is in a manner due to him, as we have said, but it is actually due to God. Man is, as it were, the receiver on God's account. Man needs food to sustain him but good food is more than bodily nourishment. It is also food for souls. The mind as much as the body is nourished by what is good. There is no such thing for man as a good which is a material good only. Man does not live by bread alone, and even bread is not only food for the stomach. Things are for delight as well as for use, but the test of delightfulness – the test by which we may judge truly and distinguish that which merely titillates our senses and no more, and ministers to our self-worship, from that which is of God, godly, the holy from the unholy–is not patient of wordy exposition. The smell of Paradise is not to be imprisoned in a sentence. Holiness is the criterion of human works, but there is no formula for holiness. It is in accord with man's nature but beyond logic. It is rational but beyond ratiocination. *Therefore* it is imperative that men shall be free. *Therefore* it is imperative that men shall own the means of production. For only thus can the ineffable be captured.

And here, more clearly than elsewhere, we may discern the enormity, the obscenity of our industrialism. It has destroyed the very thing which gives the work of man its ultimate reason. It has determined to do the one thing which cannot be done. It has sought to find formulas for delightfulness. Food, clothing, shelter — the things necessary to man's material existence, necessary therefore to salvation and necessary therefore to civilization, have been deliberately reduced to purely material significance, and the only reason why our manufacturers do not regret or suppress man's appetite to enjoy himself is that that appetite offers them even further means of exploitation. They sell him not bread alone, but the radio also. Thus not only things necessary to physical existence are degraded but the things of the mind are also brought into the sphere of accountancy — things to sell — and the world of men becomes a brothel. Leisure which, like sleep, is formally for refreshment, a means to the end that work may be renewed with love, becomes the end for which work is done, and the life of pleasure, a thing forbidden by God, forbidden because irrational as well as unholy, and unholy because irrational, the life of pleasure becomes the end and object of society. But the free man finds joy in his labor; it is only in slave societies, such as that which our industrialism, communist or capitalist, may formally be defined to be, that men look to the time when they are not working for those delights which, being of the mind, work should and does normally provide.

"In so far as one can make a distinction of secular and sacred, leisure is for secular activities, work for sacred. It is only in and by work that man can grow spiritually. . . . The goal may be purely contemplative but the way must be plodded. Hence the spiritual importance of the *actus primus*, in art, and one sees just what we are doing in condemning the greater part of men to mindless labor, treating them as machines without a goal. Furthermore mindless labor produces mindless products, so that the consumer also is diverted from the goal."* And because work is sacred and leisure secular, it was said that the freeman "does what he likes to do in his working time and in his spare time that which is required of him". This is exactly the opposite of what we say in modern England and America, and what we say here, in our whole money-lending, mass-producing world is exactly what we must necessarily say *unless we return to widespread private ownership of the means of production.*

In conclusion we must repeat a warning. Let the reader not suppose that we use the word "art" in its current and restricted sense of paintings and sculptures, music and poetry and architecture – things made solely for the delectation of makers and buyers. Art embraces *all* making. Art, as we use the word here and as it is used by the philosopher, means "the use of right reason in the making of things". Here, as Maritain says, "is the metaphysical element in human nature which in a general way makes personal ownership a matter of necessity and which is the ground of proprietary right. . . . The principle holds good whether the work be that of a craftsman or a manual laborer. . . . The exercise of art or work is the formal reason of individual appropriation." And, he adds, "in the case of the bee . . . there is no exercise of art or of work in the strict sense (since there is no reason in operation); neither is there any individual ownership". (*Freedom and The Modern World.*)

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* A. K. Coomaraswamy. (From a private letter.)

Thus we may see the reason why in our time the ideas of communism (public ownership and private use) are attractive and compelling. The capitalist period now in its decay – a decay hastened by the increasing awareness of its ignoble and, in spite of its great material achievement, its essentially mean character, its meanness, its inhumanity, and its unholiness – by its transformation of the world of human art into a likeness of the inhuman world of bees and ants makes communal ownership the necessary next step, unless the industrial organization of work be abandoned. Either private ownership, for the sake of the work to be done, must be re-established; or, deliberately surrendering men's immanent and proprietary right to imprint on matter the mark of rational being, turning away, in consequence, from the Christian society in which there shall be private ownership for the sake of the public use, we must accept communistic industrialism and look forward to the Leisure State.

Mr. Norton of Shady Hill

AUSTIN WARREN

TODAY, shrugging their sophisticated shoulders, the *soi-disant* intellectuals forsake their native bournes for megalopolis, moving their studio couches, their volumes of the Modern Library from one apartment to another, emancipated to the freedom of a vacuum, deracinated from all the loyalties which steady and define the character. To all such, Thoreau, who had travelled much – in Concord, could give lessons. Emerson, despite his incompleteness our chief contribution to the world's literature, made of a Massachusetts village the American Weimar; communing with Plutarch and Plotinus, meditating upon the *Vedas* and the *Gîtâ*, he won a spiritual franchisement and became concurrently the first citizen of Concord. The wise man stays at home and by his self-culture and rectitude draws the less furnished to it. "They who made England, Italy, or Greece venerable in the imagination, did so by sticking fast where they were, like an axis of the earth. In manly hours we feel that duty is our place." By practising this their doctrine, Emerson and Thoreau and the Alcotts made of Concord our one shrine for literary pilgrims, native and European; and one cannot doubt that the present civic well-being of that delectable town owes, in chief measure, to the examples of responsible citizenship set it by its intellectuals of the last century.

Today, with a few honorable exceptions, the village preacher and the village teacher endure their rustication only till they can manage a "call" to the city; the writer is restless till he can leave the provinces for New York and the cocktail parties of benevolent editors and publishers. It was not always so, asserts the reader of Mrs. Stowe's *Oldtown Folks*, authentic picture and discerning interpretation of New England at the end of the eighteenth century. Through the pages of Sprague's *Annals of the American Pulpit* there move, with dignity but with resolute purpose, the Calvinist clergy of New England, men of learning and intellect and civic zeal, men settled over a single parish for a lifetime and acquiring, thereby, the character as well as the style of parson, the person pre-eminent of the village. Hopkins of Newport, Bellamy of Bethlehem, Emmons of Franklin, Osgood of Medford but illustrate the type.

Even the New England factory village, when the owner of the "mill" still lived within its confines, could not totally escape from an earlier pattern. Seclude himself in hedge-fronted manor as he might, the man of wealth must drive past the tenements of the operatives, and sensibility if not conscience would necessitate a modicum of "improvements" and relief. But where, today, are the admirable Lowells of Lowell and the Lawrences of Lawrence? Not, assuredly, in the dingy and depressing towns which bear their names. Of absentee directors and stockholders, the interest in factories can scarcely be other than abstract and financial, in receipts rather than in obligations.

Respectable government of our large cities is today our despair; and, hopeless of dispossessing long-established bribery and corruption, many of the educated, turning into passive and cynical spectators, stay away from the polls. The misgovernment of our large cities is due to various causes; but assuredly the chief remains, as Charles Eliot Norton asserted in 1889, the fact that a "great portion of their inhabitants are but temporary residents in them. . . . The sense in the individual of responsibility for the good of the community is weakened by the constant shifting and alteration of its members. A man naturally takes less interest in the affairs that concern the welfare of comparative strangers than in those which affect his friends; and naturally cares less for the welfare of a community of which he is a mere transient member than of one to which he is bound for life, and with whose past and future he is united by indissoluble ties." When men own no land, when they move from city to city with the restlessness or purely private hope of the contemporary American factory "hand" or clerk or salesman, how can they experience, still less exemplify, the civic honor which has made memorable the names of Athens, Florence, Venice, Nuremberg, Bruges, and old Boston?

The two virtues requisite to the maintenance of civic life are loyalty and responsibility; and these were the principles by which Charles Norton lived and which, finely and resourcefully illustrated, made him, during the last forty years of his life, the pre-eminent friend,* the effective professor of culture, and the chief citizen of Cambridge.

* Norton has sometimes been represented as a parasite upon eminence. The view is false, as any reader of the *Letters* can make out for himself. With such friends as Ruskin and Carlyle, Norton gave quite as much as he received. Rare is that combina-

Norton was born, where he died, at Shady Hill, a gentleman's estate of fifty wooded acres, acquired by his somewhat stiff and neo-classical father, aided by the handsome dowry his through marriage with a daughter of the merchant prince, Samuel Eliot. Charles Norton's was a patrimony of more than stocks and bonds. Blood, such as the New World could boast, and social position were his. His father occupied a theological chair at Harvard, and, save for President Quincy, was the only Cantabrigian who kept a carriage; his uncle, George Ticknor of Park Street, had ben the protégé of Adams and Jefferson, had a more brilliant social career in Europe than any other American of his time, was the intimate of Metternich and the correspondent of Prince John of Saxony. His younger relatives, like President Eliot of Harvard, his cousin, came to reinforce the kindred dignitaries of his youth.

From his early years, however, the obligations of position were, by example and precept, impressed upon him. Unitarian Federalism could scarcely offer schooling in humility: men were not worms of the dust or miserable sinners; but the New England conscience remained, and, once susceptible to the agonies of Calvinism, once willing to be damned for the glory of God, it could still erect itself to moral worth as, by the quiet eloquence of William Ellery Channing, it was bidden to contemplate the dignity of human nature. Pharisaic sloth might lie ahead as the destina-

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tion of sensibility, which enables a man to comprehend the temperament of artists, and of sense, which enables him to steady them and, with practical judgement, to guide their goods to market; but such was Norton's character, such his service.

tion of Boston Unitarianism; in Norton's youth, it still retained vestigial power. The salt of the earth still felt the obligation to add savor to the less privileged world of Methodists, Baptists, and Jacksonian Democrats. Not by faith, not even by intellect were men to be saved, but by character; and men of position must, by their steady exertion of self-discipline, their constant self-improvement, give leadership to slacker spirits.

During his freshman year at Harvard, fifteen-year-old Charles Norton, suffering from eye trouble, was sent to New York for treatment. His father's counsels, administered by letter, bespeak the regimen under which Norton was reared.

> It will be a new experience of life to you; – somewhat of an early trial of your principles. . . . I have strong trust that it will be on the whole beneficial to your character. So far as it is a trial you must regard it as an appointment of God, and endeavor to improve it as such. . . . Though you can read but little in New York, yet the time need not be lost even as regards *intellectual* improvement. It is important for one fond of reading to understand and feel that information is to be gathered from many other sources besides books. I think you have very good capacity for observing what you see and hear, that you keep your eyes open, and your attention awake; and you now have a good opportunity for exercising your faculties in this way. . . . Above all consider the events of life as intended by God for our discipline, for the formation of our characters. In life much is to be suffered as well as to be enjoyed; but sufferings may be alleviated and made blessings by the qualities of character which they call into exercise. . . .

When, at twenty-one, Norton, in the capacity of supercargo, left Boston for a journey to India, his father wrote him to similar purport:

> You leave behind you an unsullied reputation, and the belief among all who know you that you have more than common powers of serving others. These are not things to make one vain. On the contrary their true tendency is to produce that deep sense of responsibility, – of what we owe to God, to our friends, and to our fellow men, – which is wholly inconsistent with presumption and vanity.

These counsels, not dissimilar to what other New Englanders of substance were offering their children, made a lasting impression upon the mind of young Norton. Pious and somewhat humorless though they were, they enunciated what was deepest in the New England character and the New England view: Life is not diverting but educational; advantages confer not immunities but obligations.

Partly under the influence of his friend, Arthur Hugh Clough, whose sacrifice of an Oxford fellowship to honest doubt he venerated, Norton gradually drew away from his father's theism and became, somewhat to the scandal of his Cambridge and Boston friends, an avowed agnostic. Toward Catholicism, his attitude, as the early *Notes of Travel and Study in Italy* will show, was firmly hostile. He cordially commended such humanitarian fraternities as the Compagnia della Misericordia. He venerated the character of Fra Angelico. In his careful essay on the building of the Cathedral at Orvieto, he celebrated the Ruskinian view of the Middle Ages as a period when artists worked, not for fame but for the glory of God and the edification of children and rustics; and he admitted that, though minor motives of civic pride and inter-civic rivalry may have played a part, the cathedral building of the period, requiring the labor and sacrifice of successive generations over a century or more, presupposed deep and constant emotion scarcely to be denied the name of religion. But even in the greatest mediaeval achievements, fear of hell seemed to him the basic motive; and the eschatology of Rome, like that of Jonathan Edwards, belonged to a "perverted system of heathenism raised upon a professedly Christian foundation".

In modern Romanism, he saw little save tyranny and superstition. He could admit that the Church performed some civilizing of the Irish peasants multiplying in Massachusetts; that, through the confessional, it kept these immigrants pecuniarily honest and chaste. But he thought it treason that the intellectuals and the well-bred should turn to Catholicism for prop and stay.*

Protestantism, both in the older and its revamped forms, he judged a complete failure – intellectually superseded by the progress of science and devoid of spiritual influence with which to combat materialism. Christian Science, "most vulgar and debasing of modern sects . . . ungrammatical, unpoetic, absurd to the last degree", repeated the superstition of the Catholic Church while divested of her dignity and noble traditions; and Mrs. Eddy, whom, in 1901, Norton characterized as "the most striking and ugliest figure in New England today", painfully reminded him that "not only a few but the vast mass of the people even in New England . . . [were still] living in the Middle Ages".

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* In Rome, Norton several times heard the Apostle to the Genteels; and of Dr. Manning he records the judgement: "a wily and soft dialectician, an ascetic by nature, to whom morals are subordinate to religion, who will lie for the sake of salvation, and who would cheat a soul into Paradise if he could not get it in honestly".

In middle life, Norton seems to have entertained, in the company of Comte and his English disciple, Frederic Harrison, the notion that, without break with the past but with the abandonment of dogma and ecclesiasticism, the Church might be transformed into an institution expressive of men's free loyalties and aspirations, into a Society spiritually articulate. The Positivist Church has gone the way of other attempts to put new wine into old bottles. In his paper on "The Church and Religion", however, Norton set forth, eloquently, that view of "true religion" which remained permanently his. It is, he defined, the

> utter, absolute devotion – to whatever men know and feel to be best. It exists whenever the individual has learned that he has no private ends, – that for all he is, and all he desires, and all he does, he is responsible to the community of which he forms a part, and which endows him with its united powers, – that possession conveys no absolute right to property, but that every man holds whatever he possesses, be it genius, faculties, opportunities, or lands and goods, not as owner, but as trustee, – and that the true worship of God consists in the service of His children, and devotion to the common interests of men.

With interest and approval, Norton read the agnostic apologies of his friend, Sir Leslie Stephen; and to the end he regarded Christianity as offering selfish motives for good conduct, as a system of rewards and penalties, debasing to the intelligence and the dignity of human nature. Sometimes he feared that a widespread emancipation from belief in the supernatural might come so rapidly as to leave the masses unprovided with other inducements to right living; and he was unoffendedly comprehensive of the alarm at his own scepticism entertained, when his appointment to the faculty was under consideration, by some trustees of Harvard College; but habitually he trusted that, through moral education in home and school, and through the appeal to men's best selves, there should emerge a humanistic civilization built upon self-knowledge, self-control, grateful recollection of the past, concern for the state, responsibility to the neighbor, loyalty to loyalty.

His genuine disturbance in later life arose from observing the decrease of intellectual honesty on the part of the upper classes. In his own circle, Norton was almost the only avowed agnostic; in England, there were more; but, for the most part, the intellectuals, timorous for themselves or for the moral state of a faithless society, combined personal scepticism with outward regard for traditional beliefs, or, like Lowell, who felt incapable of reconciling the claims of the head and the heart, Darwinism and Christianity, retreated to the soft comforts of sentiment.

It is much to Norton's credit that he did not play with Catholic modernism or with pragmatic defenses of religion or, in the manner of some eighteenth century *philosophes*, endeavor to retain the authority of religion as, though false, a useful discipline for women, children, and the ignorant. Such tactics would, properly, have seemed to him dishonest and, assuredly, as fatal to the character of those pursuing them. No useful distinction between the "pure" and the "practical" reason, between truth and expediency, will save civilization. To pragmatic suggestions that religion is true because it works, all clear-sighted apologists will reply: no; it works because it is true. The whole moral effectiveness of religion, for which some humanists prize it, depends upon its being believed metaphysically or ultimately true, and, as such, defensible by trained intellects. The man on the street, for whose virtue the moralist is concerned, has never yielded to philosophies of "as if", or "myths" or *Aberglaube*; if he remains policed by religion it is because he believes in a God above him and a moral government of the universe not the creation of his own conscience but objectively though impalpably real.

Norton, however, seems to have fallen into the Victorian state of supposing Christian morality, including its sexual prescriptions and prohibitions, to be severable from Christian faith. Like the "radical" Emerson, he politely rejected the belief in which he had been reared without departing from its accompanying moral code; and, like Arnold and George Eliot and the other virtuous pagans whose positivist ethics, examined by Mallock in *Is Life Worth Living?* and by Balfour in *The Foundations of Belief*, are proved unfounded, he seems rather naïvely to have identified Christian morality with some universal code, discoverable by naked reason and provable by human experience. It should be added that, though primarily a moralist, Norton seems totally unfamiliar with the great ethical philosophers of the past and quite unconcerned to define the principles or the bases of his own ethical thought. One does not doubt that other moral systems than those of Aquinas or Calvin can be devised, or that other *mores* than those which obtain in Anglo-Saxon countries – those of Soviet Russia, for example – can provide cultural coherence and motives for action; the weakness of the Victorians lies rather in supposing traditional English morality self-evidently approvable.

Another naïveté is the antithesis of popular religion and high morality. Just comparisons must be made at the same level. The religion of the masses may be reducible to a motivation of rewards and threats, but the religion of the saints, whether Calvinist or Catholic, may not so be defined. Dr. Samuel Hopkins's test of Christian love was the willingness to be damned for the glory of God; Edwards and Fénélon preached and practised "disinterested benevolence". If the saints be few, so are the high Socratic ethicists. Common morality is maintained by fear of the police, fear of losing one's job, fear of what other people will say, the belief that honesty is the most profitable policy. If common religion verges on superstition, common morality is but the worship of the respectable.

For a New Englander, Norton was surprisingly abstemious from self-analysis; indeed he censured introspection as morbid. Nowhere in his writings does one find any of the laments for lost faith to which Arnold and Clough, in their poetry, are prompted; nowhere does he, like Amiel, probe and brood. For all his personal elegance and his air of dilettantism, his collected objects of *virtu* and his occasionally patronizing utterances, he was a man of action, a public servant; though he had lost the Puritan faith, he kept a sense of vocation. There were times when self-culture attracted him, when the congenial society of England and the history and arts of Italy made him desire the exile of Story and James and Whistler. He looked back affectionately to the Federalist New England, believed that "the very pleasantest little oasis of space and time was that of New England from about the beginning of the century to about 1825"; but with the commercial prosperity and "progress" which began after the Civil War and was still in full career at his death he felt no sympathy, and of its boasted achievements he was persistently critical. He frankly avowed that, for his own pleasure, he would have chosen to make Italy or still more England, where he had found a congenial society, his home. What brought him back and what kept him back was his sense of responsibility – to his children, who must not be deracinated, to his self-confident country, which stood in need of such loving and unsparing criticism as his own. Returning in 1857, he wrote his friend, Professor Child of Harvard, "The grandeur of our opportunities is proportionate to the immensity of our deficiencies, – so that one may rejoice to be an American even while seeing how far we fall short in many ways of what is accomplished elsewhere, and how much we have to do to make life what it ought to be and might be. But to be contented here one must work."

Norton worked. Though he was sometimes inclined to believe self-cultivation the chief service an American could render his country, and though his personal distinction was such as to justify his existence, he did not offer himself to his country as a mere example;

he bent his efforts and his influence toward the accomplishment of whatever labor of civic usefulness was presented by others or occurred to his own projective brain. In collaboration with Lowell, but himself chief agent, he edited the most solid of our quarterlies, *The North American Review;* he founded the Archaeological Institute of America; he translated the *Divina Commedia* and the *Vita Nuova*; he inaugurated the Cambridge Dante Society; more than any other individual, he was responsible for the inception of *The Nation* and for the eminently sound selection of E. L. Godkin as its executor;* he edited the "Heart of Oak" series of common-school readers, designed to acquaint the young American with "the intellectual life of the race to which he belongs".

The "work" eminently his was begun at the late age of forty-eight, when Norton became, at his cousin, President Eliot's, appointment, the first Professor of the History of Art at Harvard and the first university teacher of the subject in the United States. For this work, all that he was and all that he had learned had prepared him; and the strength of his lectures came from their being the expression of the whole man, not of his memory alone. Tardy in his own aesthetic development, not himself a painter or in any of the arts a creator, and always more conscious of them as aids to "culture" than as gratifications of sensibility, Norton had a none the less admirable equipment for his office: he had lived, not merely travelled, in Italy and, without uncritical discipleship, had profited from the enthusiastic guidance of his intimate, John Ruskin;* he had pursued patient researches into the mediaeval records of Orvieto, Venice, Siena, Florence, St. Denis, and Chartres, making himself an exact scholar in what chiefly concerned him — the intellectual, political, and moral conditions under which great artistic achievements, like the building of cathedrals, occur; as their friend, he was familiar with the personalities, the temperament, the methods, and the aims of many living artists, notably Morris and Burne-Jones; and, like Ruskin, a follower and purchasing patron of contemporary art as well as a student and exegete of the Italian primitives, he felt, and was able to make others feel, as a mere learned curator could not, the continuity between the past and the present. Lastly, believing in art as the expression of civilization and inseparable from the moral and political state of that civilization, he could present, to practical young Americans, a defense of the arts which recommended them to all men who desired for themselves, and for their nation, the development of a balanced and complete humanity.

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* *The Life and Letters of Edwin Lawrence Godkin* contains much correspondence to and from Norton; and Godkin's pronouncements on the debasement of American society have much the candor and astringency of Norton's own. From 1865 to the end of the century, *The Nation* at once reflected and guided the best minds of New England.

Norton's eldest son once aptly characterized his father's courses as "Lectures on Modern Morals as

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* Norton's early reading of *Modern Painters* appears to have initiated his studies of art. In 1855, he met Ruskin; though his relation was never that of disciple, and though he deplored Ruskin's increasing deflection from art to economics, and though he did not share his friend's later "views", he probably owed to Ruskin his persistent belief in the marriage of art and morality. Excellent judge of men and portraitist that he ever was, Norton excels in his analyses of Ruskin's troubled, affectionate nature.

Illustrated by the Art of the Ancients". The integrity of the teacher's mind made any other course impossible. *Ut praesentia ditaret praeterita scrutabatur.* The real, as distinct from historic, judgements formed by a mature man must all proceed from the same center: he could not apply one set of standards to the Periclean Greeks and another to the students at Harvard. The aim of the lectures was, of course, to present and to illustrate and to enforce the importance of civilization; and to this end Norton plied his learning, his wit, his sarcasm, his pathos, his character, till two hundred men, many of whom had elected a palpably "snap" course, were shamed and exhorted and stirred into consciousness of our national shortcomings and wholesome resolves to make their country venerable. In the judgement of John Jay Chapman, whose estimate has authority, this teacher had a more widespread influence on the students than had any other Harvard professor of the time.

After his retirement, in 1898, Norton continued to follow the development of Harvard, the expansion in numbers and curriculum of the American universities, and the changing standards of higher education and scholarship. He saw with clarity the direction in which the colleges were moving: the opening of the curriculum to vocational skills, the increase of specialization, the dominance of German *Wissenschaft*, the overwhelming importance assigned to professional athletics. The old Harvard, before Eliot had dragooned it into efficiency and science, had been a fraternity of scholars and gentlemen like Child, Lowell, Longfellow, and Goodwin – men to whom no branch of learning was completely alien and who possessed a common culture. But by 1899 this older world of humanists had passed away; and Norton, whose conception of education belonged, with whatever enlargements or corrections in detail, to the earlier and sounder order, could write: "Not even in Cambridge can I now get together half a dozen men or women round a table, who have a large common background for their thoughts, their wit, their humor. Literature in the best sense used to supply a good deal of it, but does so no longer. My fair neighbor asks, 'What are Pericles?' " Not compensatory for ignorance of the important was knowledge of the unimportant. Confronted with a statement of faculty researches and publications at the University of Pennsylvania, Norton was unimpressed to learn that one scholar had been compiling references to sea-sickness in Greek and Latin literature and that another had continued his investigations of the knee-jerk.

He was prompt to recognize and generous in his praise of academic performances which met his standards. W. P. Ker's *The Dark Ages* and *Essays on Mediaeval Literature* placed their author with Mackail in "that union of culture with learning, of good letters with good scholarship, which is the boast of the best English scholars . . . and which is seldom shared by the Germans, who are apt to be nothing but learned, or by the French, who are apt to subordinate learning to pleasant easy literary style". Gilbert Murray and S. H. Butcher won similar commendation; and, among American scholars, Norton singled out George Woodberry, Irving Babbitt, Paul More, and George Santayana.

The same judicial temper, the same self-consistency, marked his literary estimates, chiefly – for he was not a professional critic – to be found in his letters; and here again he read, without shift of standards, both the old and the new. A wholesome *nil admirari* and a life-long study of Dante held him to proportion in his judgements of contemporary literature, even when it was the work of his New England friends. He was slightly repelled by the "temperament of a tenor singer" in Byron, and by the preciosity of Pater; he preferred Malory to Tennyson's *Idylls*; valued Arnold's poetry; justly defined Longfellow's talent as that of "saying beautiful things at the level of the broad public". *Leaves of Grass* he analyzed with equal absence of prudery and abandon:

> Whitman has read the "Dial" and [Emerson's] "Nature", and combines the characteristics of a Concord philosopher with those of a New York fireman. There is little original thought but much original expression in it. There are some passages of most vigorous and vivid writing, some superbly graphic description, great stretches of imagination, – and then passages of intolerable coarseness, – not gross and licentious, but simply disgustingly coarse.

To a twentieth-century reader, "intolerable" and "disgustingly" are extravagant, but "coarse" and not "licentious" is the right distinction; the censure which Norton omits and which needs to be added is of Whitman's frequent sheer, gaseous verbosity; but, with these emendations, the estimate can stand; and, written at a time when Emerson saluted his disciple, and Whittier committed his presentation copy to the parlor stove, it shows discriminate balance.

A yet more exacting test-case for critical poise is Emerson, whom one is tempted to call the most slippery of all our literary customers. His sinless character, his angelic presence, his national eminence make judgement seem ungracious; never was rebel so serene, radical so hallowed. During his latter years, he enjoyed, in consequence, an approximate immunity. Matthew Arnold's lecture on the "friend of those who would live in the spirit", delivered, with temerity, before the very Bostonians, evoked, by its preliminary distinctions, discriminations, and qualifications, the "provincial ire of the pure disciples"; but Norton called it "a piece of large, liberal, genuine criticism", quarrelled with no part of it.

Norton's judgements, frequent in his letters and his essays, are clear-sighted and just, both in their discernment of Emerson's prime rank among our authors and in their analysis of his position and influence.* "No best man with us has done more to influence the nation than Emerson," he wrote in 1870; "but the country has in a sense outgrown him. He was the friend and helper of its youth; but for the difficulties and struggles of its manhood we need the wisdom of the reflective and rational understanding, not that of the intuitional. Emerson . . . belongs to the pure and innocent age of the Presidency of Monroe or John Quincy Adams, – to the time when Plancus was Consul, – to the day of Cacciaguida, . . ." Returning from England with Emerson in 1873, Norton was impressed with the limits of his friend's mind.

> His optimistic philosophy had hardened into a creed . . . and, though of a nobler type than the common American

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* In 1883, Norton judged Emerson "nearer to being a poet than any other American". Admirable alike for its boldness and its reserve, the judgement will command more general consent now than when it was written.

> conceit of the pre-eminent excellence of American things as they are, had hardly less of the quality of fatalism. . . . Such inveterate and persistent optimism . . . is dangerous doctrine for a people. It degenerates into fatalistic indifference to moral considerations, and to personal responsibilities; it is at the root of much of the irrational sentimentalism in our American politics. . . .

Emerson had preached self-reliance; and men had been pleased to dispense with culture and to trust to their temperamental selves; he had preached spiritual optimism, and Americans had grown confident that a *manifest destiny* was theirs and that, whatever they did, glory would attend the nation's future. The innocents abroad; the jingoists; Mrs. Eddy, who defined evil as an illusion of mortal mind and whose followers went about serenely, blandly smiling; the New Thoughtist exhorters to "success"; the sophists of advertising: could not all find texts in Emerson?

Perhaps our people had once been too colonial, too deferential to European opinion; but, Norton felt sure, the case was no longer so. What if our intellectual declaration of independence meant not the production at home and for home-consumption of great minds and great literature but a mere national vanity which pronounced Peck the Pindar of Arkansas, which found an inglorious Milton in every village, which, in its journals, performed the weekly canonization of mediocrity?

The rapidity of our material expansion – the opening up of state after state, till from Atlantic to Pacific the land was occupied by men of energy and ambition; the accelerating increase in our population; the wonders of railroad, gas, electricity, speedily made available to the masses; in the world of "culture", the multiplication of public schools and public libraries: here were, indeed, achievements, surpassing those of the Old World. The universe had never known our like before. But what if, upon sober reflection – if, whirling across New York State to Chicago we had leisure for reflection – what if these conquests of matter and diffusions of comfort and literacy had produced no commensurate dignity or elevation? All men could read; but what did they read? all men could vote; for whom, so enfranchised, did they vote? In their rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness one may grant men's equality; but aesthetically, intellectually, morally, spiritually, men are unequal. Has not our political democracy overstepped its limits and dispensed with those hierarchies which owe no allegiance to majority votes, no election to the counting of plebeian noses?

Like Ruskin, Norton was a critic of society as well as of art; like Matthew Arnold, whose influence he deemed salutary, Norton offered his nation the faithful wounds of a friend. Not to flatter his countrymen or praise them for their achievement was his office, but to expose their flabbiness and shabbiness, to shatter their idols, to warn them of imminent perils, to check their fatalistic self-confidence, to hold up to their emulation the complementary virtues of other nations – to be not their advertising agent but their monitor.

Like Arnold, Norton believed in political democracy; and he prized at its proper value the spectacle of millions of Americans living "with more comfort, with less fear, than any such numbers elsewhere in any age have lived"; but he knew as well that such a state is merely foundational to "civilization", and must not be mistaken for it.

Norton's social criticism began with *Considerations on Some Recent Social Theories* (1853), published when its author was twenty-six, and it continued till his death. From much which he said in his early book, Norton would later have dissented, though not from the spirit which prompted it. Distinctly, and youthfully, conservative, its tone cannot be called reactionary. The prefatory motto, which might well have served for all Norton's criticism, comes from the great Burke: "Flattery corrupts both the receiver and the giver; and adulation is not of more service to the people than to kings"; in the spirit of the Old Whig, of Burke's *Reflections*, the young critic counselled sanity, moderation, continuity, gradual change. Evils in the *ancien régime* assuredly there were, but rash reversals can effect no permanent good; and in revolt against one error we must not merely substitute its opposite. The divine right of kings is doubtless absurd, but the divine right of the majority is no improvement. It is not to the "people" that we are to look for wisdom: their progress "must be stimulated and guided by the few who have been blessed with the opportunities and the rare genius fitting them to lead". The "recent theories" considered are those of such reformers as Kossuth, Mazzini, and Louis Blanc – the radicals of the day. That reform is necessary Norton does not doubt: European inequality in wealth is a reproach to civilization. But we must distinguish. Some inequality is correspondent to the moral and intellectual disparities; some, to human institutions.

Socialism, as a remedy, does not differentiate these two kinds of inequality; and, by this failure, it proposes a Utopian state founded upon a misreading of human nature. Again, sensitive to the abuses of private property, socialism proposes to abolish its use, though, clearly, the responsibility which inheres in ownership promotes the "development of much of what is best in character". Neither here nor subsequently does Norton sufficiently analyze or develop his conceptions of just inequality and real property; nor does he anywhere indicate what checks should be imposed upon the growth of finance-capitalism; but it seems evident that he was reaching toward such views as, under the name of Distributism, have, in our day, arrived at articulation.

How, without rupture of the ties which bind us to the past, can we effect, gradually and peaceably, a more just state of society? Young Norton saw some hope in trade unions, more in cooperative associations; but he attached chief importance to the education of the poorer classes. "The first duty, the first necessity, is to help them to gain possession of their intellectual and moral natures. . . . Education is the hope for the future of the laborer."

Between this early book and two essays, "The Intellectual Life of America" and "Some Aspects of Civilization in America", published respectively in 1886 and 1896, Norton's thought underwent change both in essence and in emphasis. His book chiefly considered the state of Europe, where justice for the worker was the immediate necessity. In his essays, the most mature and considered statements of his social attitude, Norton is addressing himself to the specifically American problem of democracy and culture, to the question, that is, "whether the highest results attained by the civilization of the past, and hitherto confined to a select and comparatively small body, can be preserved, diffused, and made the foundation of a social order in which all advantages shall be more equally shared; or whether the establishment of more democratic forms of society will involve a loss which such gains in human conditions as may result from the new system cannot make good, however much they may outweigh it in their sum".

In 1853, Norton still believed in religion and could, when reason failed or a problem seemed insoluble, invoke the "will of God"; then the republican form of government appeared feasible for America because of our widespread moral and intellectual training in the common schools and at home. At the end of the century, religion – at least as commonly understood – had ceased to be an answer; the "home" had relaxed its vigilance; and universal instruction in the rudiments of knowledge no longer offered assurance of responsible franchise. Norton spoke out plainly:

> The foreign boss of Tammany Hall, who rules the city of New York, who has assumed the garb of civilization and sits at rich men's feasts, is still a semi-barbarian. The free school has not educated him, nor the hordes of his tribal followers. Yet while he and his fellows sell justice, commit daily barratry,* practise blackmail, and make a scoff and byword of law, the self-complacent American looks on and says, with an optimism which he flatters himself is the spirit of genuine patriotism: "Oh, it will all come out all right. Free education is the safeguard of the Republic."

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* *Cf. Inferno*, Canto XXII, and the Boston newspapers of 1936.

These essays, like the social criticism of the English Victorians, seem rather prophetic than historical: the abuses they stigmatize have grown more palpable, more flagrant. The problems of the Victorians are still ours; nor can it be said that we have any solutions for them not to be, essentially, found in Ruskin, Carlyle, Newman, and Arnold. Norton's survey is one painfully familiar: an advance in comfort and science, accompanied by a decline of fame, rank, learning, and honor as motives to action; the increasing reduction of power to a single species – wealth; the sensationalism of the popular press; the monotonous uniformity of our cities and citizens; subconscious conformity and moral timorousness; the prevalence of quantity over quality; the impudence of our children; the professionalization of university football and the abandonment of university Greek; the corruption of our politics; the deterioration of Congress; the steady growth of disrespect for rightful authority; the confusion of prosperity with welfare.

It is a delusion, the older Norton saw, that the common school is sufficient to banish ignorance or to make our people capable of self-government. Yet, for him, as for Arnold, education remained the only answer to modern and American ills. We have our minority, our "saving remnant"; and upon the proper education, aesthetic, moral, and intellectual, of the elect must be based such hopes for the future of democracy as a patriotic but cool-headed man can cherish. Said Norton in the voice of Arnold, "The general tendency of modern civilization to render mediocrity the ascendant power in society has received no check, but seems, rather to become steadily more positive, and is exhibited on the largest scale in America." We have given a smattering to all, with the consequences – one might add – of giving to all an unwarranted self-confidence; but in seeking to educate the masses, we have neglected the chief task of a democracy – to provide for the slow, full, rich mature minds which, under proper discipline, shall be capable of leadership.

Education cannot produce the genius, nor does anyone deny that an occasional great man is our sheer gratuity. Lincoln, of whom Norton's letters show him to have had a growing appreciation, might seem to show the futility of formal training, the promise and indeed the achievement of the frontier, democracy, Nature. Norton's clarity of vision was not blurred by the exception. The real value of education lies in its provision for a continuity of informed and responsible leadership – such leadership as is furnished by the English civil service and diplomatic corps, by Cantabrigians and Oxonians, men of trained intelligence and disciplined character, loyal to civilization of the past, the conscious trustees for the future.

Upon our universities, especially upon such of them as by age and endowments are independent of immediate pressure from alumni and the legislature and "popular opinion", upon the "higher education", Norton would place his chief hope of our national wellbeing. But by "higher" he did not mean more professional or more specialized. "I call a complete and generous education that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war," Milton had said. The "higher" education, in Milton's sense or Norton's, would not train the intellect or the memory alone, making the specialist but leaving the personality unguided or perverted; the "higher" is the more "liberal"; and a liberal education, as Norton was careful to define it, not only ministers to the reason and the understanding but "quickens and disciplines the imagination, and, instilling into the soul of youth the sense of proportion between the things of the spirit and the things of sense, animates it with ambitions that are safeguards of character not less than motives of action".

The burden thus placed upon the university is prodigious. Without assistance from traditional religion, without reliance upon the deliquescing home, without an ethical system coherently articulated and systematically defended, the "higher education" must train, in taste and intellect and character, the elect minority committed to its care. And how will this minority of philosopher-kings effect the salvation of the state? Like Irving Babbitt, Norton refused to commit his hopes to organization or lobbying or the enactment of legislation or an army. Ultimately, he held, society can be improved only "by the slow processes of self-improvement gradually embodied in public opinion"; only through the personal influence of the man who has himself achieved rectitude.

Whether, unaided, the university can sustain civilization one may well doubt; and, here in America, at least in our overgrown cities, one must question whether the personal influence of the *integres vitae* can sufficiently make itself felt to control a population emancipated from respect for its real as well as its nominal superiors. Norton's final ditch was Roman:

we must contend for what we believe right, though we have no assurance that it will prevail; in the struggle, we can employ no methods which, if used toward our personal aggrandizement, we should deem immoral. Civilization as we understand it may fail; let us, at least, not fail it.

Norton was a Florentine, an Athenian, the upright aristocrat of a city state, the squire of Shady Hill. His own devotion to the *rēs publicae*; his loyalty to his principles; his faithful discharge of his responsibilities; his self-consistency: these gave his career the hortatory force of example. No thoughtful American can turn to his letters without being sobered and steadied; they constitute a civic education.

Norton was a gentleman, perhaps the purest example we have produced. The true gentleman lives in the recollection that he is not "self-made", that all he is he owes; it is not easy for those who "rise" to be so humble. Inheritance, to the gentleman, must be a perpetual trusteeship: what he has received, he must transmit; and, if he is faithful, he will leave, to his children and his friends and the community in which he is incorporated, an increase – not of specious but of real wealth – of culture, of character, of influence.

When the man of inherited means and position loses that sense of obligation, when he accepts as his personal due and his personal merit that which is but his endowment and his platform, then he becomes the mere parasite upon society, the mere agent of conspicuous waste. Today, everywhere over the world, the leisure class is imperilled. To those of us who prize the values which, at its rare best, this class has produced, and who are doubtful whether egalitarianism, even abetted by the machine, can furnish its equivalent, the prospect is painful. What can save an aristocracy? The fate of our first families depends, in large measure, upon their own morals.

This does not mean that they must betake themselves to earning wages. Toward the end of Langland's *Piers Plowman* there is a striking passage in which the Knight, convicted of sin by the peasant's preaching begs, in humility, for instruction in plowing, begs to share in the peasant's labor. The plowman refuses, bidding the Knight pursue, as a Christian gentleman, the vocation committed to his class:

I shal swynke and swete and sowe for us bothe,
And other laboures do for thi love al my lyf-tyme,
In covenaunt that thow kepe holikirke and my-selve
Fro wastoures and fro wykked men that this worlde struyeth.

Tolstoi has not been the only Arcadian to suppose that the aristocrat must serve with his hands, for narrow conceptions of work beset those whose scrupulosity outruns their intelligence. Aristotle and the Middle Ages knew better. *Orare est laborare;* yes, and *Cogitare est laborare.*

In contemporary America, integrity has become a luxury; and Mr. Stuart Chase has pointed the moral: only economic autonomy can safeguard intellectual independence. Our legislators keep their ears to the ground, will not espouse unpopular causes; our educators busy themselves in supplying the popular demand for popular novelties. The two classes today which can still provide integrity are the farmers and the gentlemen. From them, and especially from the latter, must come that free criticism, that unbribed leadership, which a republic requires.

Norton steadfastly decried all forms of jingoism and suffered attack, both from newspapers and anonymous correspondents, for his outspoken opposition to the Spanish-American War. He did rightly; it was the Knight's office so to do. It may, indeed, be said that all men should have the same moral courage; and, ideally, they should; but under our present order, most men cannot be expected to sacrifice wages to convictions. To the economically independent we must look for honest witness in times when popular feeling and propaganda rule the masses.

Sometimes the gentleman is an artist, like Henry James; sometimes a thinker, like Berkeley; sometimes a saint like King Louis. More often, he belongs in none of these supreme categories; and to have real, though lower, value he need not be more than the morally responsible, intellectually responsive *honnête homme*, the protector and interpreter of the artist, the thinker, and the saint – the transmitter of culture, the guardian of society.

Such a gentleman, if I read him aright, was Norton. In his thinking, he stopped at the first wind, was inadequately persistent. In his character, he was far more indebted than he knew to the religion which he rejected. His solutions of our problems, which he saw with clarity, are, though sound so far as they go, inadequate. The direction and the example remain. While America can beget patriots so critical in their loyalty and so responsible, we shall not despair of the republic.

REVIEWS

Educational Reform*

This essay on The Higher Learning in America, originally delivered in New Haven as one of the Storrs Lectures, must have come as something of a shock even to an audience which had known Mr. Hutchins as a Dean at Yale before he was called to the presidency of the University of Chicago. For in addition to outlining more clearly than heretofore his own vision of the future organization of American education, he delivers as devastating a criticism as has yet been made of present American educational practice.

Concerning the College of Liberal Arts he says:

> The degree it offers seems to certify that the student has passed an uneventful period without violating any local, state, or federal law, and that he has a fair, if temporary, recollection of what his teachers have said to him. . . . Little pretense is made that many of the things said to him are of much importance.

Concerning the glorification of the Ph. D. degree he says:

> The students who are going to be teachers are put through a procedure which was designed to produce investigators. . . . Seventy-five percent [of Ph. D. students] have no interest in research; at least, that percentage never does any more after the exertions of the dissertation. . . .

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* THE HIGHER LEARNING IN AMERICA *by Robert Maynard Hutchins* (YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS. 120 pp. $2.00).

He condemns the professional schools for attempting to teach techniques, outmoded by the time of graduation, instead of discussing principles, which constitute the only truly intellectual content of the professional studies. He condemns college administrations for yielding to the whims of public interest as well as to the whims of millionaires by agreeably introducing new courses of study and modifying old ones. He scoffs at alumni for manifesting every concern with their colleges except that for which they alone are suited – "to represent in their own persons the virtues for which their alma mater stands". And he confronts the present uncertainty of educators as to *what* to teach with a refreshing confidence of his own:

> If there are permanent studies which every person who wishes to call himself educated should master [and Mr. Hutchins is convinced there are]; if those studies constitute our intellectual heritage, then those studies should be the center of a general education. They cannot be ignored because they are difficult, or unpleasant, or because they are almost totally missing from our curriculum today. . . . Educators cannot permit their students to dictate the course of study unless they are prepared to confess that they are nothing but chaperons, supervising an aimless, trial-and-error process which is chiefly valuable because it keeps young people from doing something worse. . . . If we are Educators we must have a subject matter, and a rational, defensible one. . . . It cannot be assumed that students at any age will always select the subjects that constitute education. If we permit them to avoid them, we cannot confer upon them insignia which certify to the public that they are in our opinion educated.

Mr. Hutchins's own convictions as to the proper subject-matter of a general education are refreshingly traditional, in the pre-Dewey, pre-Eliot sense. It is first of all based upon great books:

> You will observe that the great books of the Western world cover every department of knowledge. . . . Such books are a part, and a large part, of the permanent studies. . . . How can we call a man educated who has never read any of the great books of the Western world? Yet today it is entirely possible for a student to graduate from the finest American colleges without having read any of them, except possibly Shakespeare. . . .

To books as such Mr. Hutchins adds grammar, in order to be able to read books; rhetoric and logic, the arts of writing and thinking; and mathematics, the best exemplar of the processes of the human reason.

Such a general education, according to Mr. Hutchins, should take place – and here we enter upon the author's special set of views – *outside* the university, in junior colleges which will comprise the last two years of high school and the first two years of college, replacing the present Liberal Arts College as such, and becoming "the characteristic educational institution in the United States, just as the high school has been up to now". And its purpose, in Mr. Hutchins's university-preoccupied view, is primarily to provide the necessary basis upon which a university education must rest – a common stock of fundamental ideas, a common intellectual heritage. "Everybody cannot be a specialist in every field. He must therefore be cut off from every field but his own unless he has the same basic education that other specialists have."

There is no space here to describe the university education which Mr. Hutchins proposes to build on this basis ("In summary . . . three faculties, metaphysics, social science, and natural science . . . the professors would be those who were thinking about the fundamental problems in those fields."). And if so much space has been devoted to his criticism of existing educational practice and his proposals for a general education, it is because here arise the criticisms which should be made of this otherwise admirable, lively, and useful book.

One needs to be neither philosopher nor theologian to discover in Mr. Hutchins's viewpoint the glorification of the intellect at the expense of all the other faculties; the aversion from the moral in favor of the intellectual; the tendency to speak in terms of "the thinking of the race", "the attributes of the race", rather than in terms of the human individual, which marks the complete rationalist, the seeker after Pure Truth. The trinity of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful is no trinity for Mr. Hutchins at all: the Beautiful is ignored entirely; the Good is fobbed off into a minor position; all the stress is on the True, and little interconnection is implied. Could anything be more intellecto-centric, for example, than his statement that "material prosperity, peace and civil order, justice and *the moral virtues are means to the cultivation of the intellect*"? Could anything so beg the question of morals as his statement that "since character is the result of choice it is difficult to see how you can develop it unless you train the mind to make intelligent (*sic*) choices"? And could anything so clearly indicate a scorn for a moral content in education as his expressed fear that "the university may become an overgrown college where the success of a professor is determined by his ability to keep students awake *and his extra-curriculum influence on their morals* and manners"? For all of Mr. Hutchins, his universities could be quite satisfactorily manned by acknowledged criminals whose high intelligence would simply mean that the greater their intellectual accomplishments, the greater the harm they could do. And by the same reasoning, society would be just as well off if no preacher practised what he preached.

One is almost inclined to suspect, therefore, that Mr. Hutchins's calm annihilation of the present small liberal arts college, and its replacement by the "junior college", is in part explained by his dislike of the pretensions to training in character which the best of these small colleges have always made. Yet it seems more than likely that the admirable program of general education which he outlines is only conceivable in practice in these same small colleges, however tainted with moral training their earlier traditions may be. From at least one reviewer's viewpoint it is far more important for the health of society that such colleges should exist to provide both moral and intellectual training, to produce men of both character and culture, than that sanctuaries should be created for the pursuit of pure, amoral truth; and indeed with the effective existence of the first, the pursuit of truth can hardly fail to follow. Mr. Hutchins almost seems to admit the point when he writes that "the times call for the establishment of a new college or for an evangelistic movement in some old ones which shall have for its object the conversion of individuals and finally of the teaching profession to a true conception of general education" – a statement which seems to belie a sneering reference to "the nauseating anecdote" about Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and the student on the other.

MARVIN MCCORD LOWES

The Ordered Void*

WALLACE Stevens has the reputation of being an elegant amongst poets, and it is a reputation that leaves him in a rather lonely position at the moment. Most of the versifiers now in the public eye are sailing like a raft of logs on the intellectual drift to the left and deceive themselves, and their enthusiastic critics, that they have escaped the subjective *impasse* of the twenties by putting revolutionary doctrines into their songs. If Mr. Stevens is sad, he is not sad at his lonely position and his second book in twenty-two years of writing shows that he has made no shift in method or outlook. The distress of the times, it is true, has not escaped his ears, attuned though they are to the most delicate and secret of rhythms; he knows "the streets are full of cries" and bids the modern poet be "the voice of angry fear". Still this bidding is no direction to compete with the pamphleteer; the poet is asked to echo the cry that is heard in the land because he "must be the exponent of the imagination of that society". Such is the task that Mr. Stevens himself attempts, and he says of his book: "*Ideas of Order* attempts to illustrate the rôle of the imagination in life, and particularly in life at present."

* **IDEAS OF ORDER** ***by Wallace Stevens*** **(KNOPF. 61 pp. $2.00).**

The rôle of the imagination in life is for Mr. Stevens a very large one, and it is one essentially creative; the imagination, so to speak, creates life. Irving Babbitt, a critic whom I imagine Mr. Stevens would not find especially congenial, also laid great emphasis on the importance of the imagination, deeming it the faculty through which man could achieve a sane and true vision of life not to be had from reason alone. But he imposed restraints on the imagination of a kind that Mr. Stevens, by the testimony of his verse, would not be willing to accept, for his imagination, by definition and by practice, is restricted by none but its inherent laws. In his first book, *Harmonium*, Mr. Stevens called

> *The magnificent cause of being,*
> *The imagination, the one reality*
> *In this imagined world. . . .*

and in "The Idea of Order at Key West" in the present volume he develops this notion:

> *She was the single artificer of the world*
> *In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea,*
> *Whatever self it had, became the self*
> *That was her song, for she was the maker. Then we,*
> *As we beheld her striding there alone,*
> *Knew that there never was a world for her*
> *Except the one she sang and, singing, made.*

This, of course, might only be the justifiably exaggerated lyric expression of a mood, but we have it on Mr. Stevens's word that it attempts to convey "the idea of order created by individual concepts". The poet seeks "to order words of the sea . . . in ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds". Certainly there can be little argument with this last statement; it is the passage through the ordering and analytical processes of the poet's mind that makes poetry of the observed thing or emotion. What is important to remember is that these processes are not entirely autonomous; while there is in them a residuum strictly poetic (which talent or genius will provide), they also require the extending influence of a system of general ideas. And this is the clue to why Mr. Stevens is impenetrably obscure at times and can, at last, offer no very satisfactory order; for he is engaged in the impossible creation of a self-sustaining poetry, in an attempt to solve the philosopher's problems with only the literary craftsman's equipment.

The idea of the poem as an object-in-itself is one widely current at present. Its theory has been stated at length by Mr. Richards and it has found considerable support in certain remarks of Mr. Eliot's (notably about a poem's emotion's being distinct from its maker's) which are right enough in their place but wrong in the use made of them by some of his followers. This notion of the self-sufficient poem is allied, on the one hand, to the apologies for abstract painting and, on the other, to the romantic conception of the rightness of individual instinct. From the latter it takes its identification of the value of the poet's perception as such with the value of a work of art. With abstract painting it raises up aesthetic contemplation as the *raison d'être* of art, thereby reducing art to a sum of its physical components. The result is a partial or even entire absence of meaning, and those spectators who insist on meaning are dubbed Philistines, asking of art but comfortable support of their moral conventions because they are not sensitive enough to enjoy pure line and color or pure sound and imagery. Strivings after "purity" along these lines are common in Mr. Stevens's work; if he can but get perfect technical order, the exact expression of his mood or observation, he is satisfied that he has a poem, and will offer us, under the title "Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery" and neatly initialed with Roman numerals, fifty such things as this:

The children will be crying on the stair,
Half-way to bed, when the phrase will be spoken,
The starry voluptuary will be born.

The explanation of Mr. Stevens's celebrated search for precision (his love of obsolete and odd words is happily less evident in this volume) in part is to be found in the manifest influence on him of the Imagists (who were most prominent when his poems first began to appear) and their creed of the poem as an exact picture. But there is an explanation beyond this, and beyond a fastidious turn of mind; and it lies in the fact that if communication is to be made without the use of intellectual abstractions (usually heightened in poetry by the use of peculiar figures of sense), it is necessary to get the essentially particular into words, to get the rarity of a June day into one's lines rather than to evoke the idea of it by remarking on it, and this, of course, calls for ceaseless efforts toward exactitude. Curiously, the result is a loss of sharpness: we can get the peculiar nature of a man's sensation only in so far as he expresses it in approximation to the universal nature of that sensation. These lines are exact in statement:

A dithery gold falls everywhere.
It wets the pigeons,

It goes and the birds go,
Turn dry,

Birds that never fly
Except when the bishop passes by,
Globed in today and tomorrow,
Dressed in his colored robes.

But so was the scene which we may suppose it describes stated exactly by nature itself, if with more detail. Mr. Stevens has selected carefully and condensed enormously; but since we are given the scene with no significance other than that it is presented in precise form, our enjoyment is limited to the selection and condensation – to technical devices.

It would be unfair to Mr. Stevens if what has been said were taken to mean that he does nothing more than create pretty *petit-point* objects in verse. He does that a great deal (relatively speaking, his production is slight), but he also offers a vision of things outside of his knick-knack corner. What that vision is he states with reference to neo-classical painting:

But in Claude how near one was
(In a world that was resting on pillars,
That was seen through arches)
To the central composition,
The essential theme.

But this architecture has no real foundations; it is projected from the mind out upon an airy flux. For man, life without poetry would be a life lacking greatly in one form of order, yet this art in itself is not enough to insure order, for its own order is dependent upon the appreciation of an order more comprehensive, one that is not limited to the arrangement of words but embraces those things of which words are the counters and which give words their value. The idealistic retreat into a symmetrical cloud castle is as dangerous in poetry as in philosophy, and the forms placed upon such shifting substance fail of the clarity so desperately sought and in the end dissolve as each man alters them at will.

GEOFFREY STONE

The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy *

IN 1931 and 1932 the Gifford Lectures in the University of Aberdeen were entrusted to Etienne Gilson, the well-known French exponent of Neo-Scholasticism. In view, he says, of the widespread notion that the Middle Ages lacked a system of rational thought that could be called their own, Gilson accepted the invitation extended to him to define the spirit of mediaeval philosophy. His response to that invitation was delivered in twenty lectures, here published in book form.

Gilson found himself confronted with a twofold task. First, he had to drive home to his hearers a due appreciation of the historical fact that the Middle Ages were a period of intense philosophical activity and were, besides, an integral phase of the development of that Western philosophy the foundations of which were laid for us by the searching mind of the Greeks. In other words, at the very outset he was

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* THE SPIRIT OF MEDIAEVAL PHILOSOPHY *by Etienne Gilson, translated by A. H. C. Downes* (SCRIBNER'S. 490 pp. $3.50).

compelled to take account of the academic prejudice still active in philosophical circles today.

As an example of this unworthy attitude of modern historians of philosophy we find a writer like Hamelin telling us that Descartes "is in succession with the ancients, almost as if, with the exception of a few naturalists, there had been nothing but a blank between". In a brilliant page Gilson makes short work of this fallacious use of the word *almost.* He calls attention to the close kinship of the Cartesian system to patristic and mediaeval thought. Malebranche, the philosophical forerunner of Berkeley and of Hume, is shown by Gilson to be the disciple of Augustine as much as he is that of Descartes. Kant, with all the personalism that pervades his doctrine, is frankly described as "but an heir of the Christian tradition when he recognized in the person the identity of a thinking substance which remains one and the same beneath all its multiple acts". And there is a forthright assertion that, were it not for the wealth of mediaeval thought of which we moderns are the inheritors, "neither Kantian morals nor Cartesian metaphysics would ever have seen the light of day". Indeed, Gilson's attitude on our debt to the mediaeval philosophers is clearly indicated when he says: "It is a curious fact, and well worth noting, that if our contemporaries no longer appeal to *The City of God* and the Gospel as Leibniz did not hesitate to do, it is not in the least because they have escaped their influence. Many of them live by what they choose to forget."

His persistent argument, backed up by an abundance of historical evidence, is that the Middle Ages were a period of philosophical progress and that this progress rested upon the continuity of the Greek tradition. The thinkers of the patristic period and the philosophers of the mediaeval phase, we are told, set out from Greek philosophy, from Plato and Aristotle; and it was due to these two men that the Middle Ages were able to achieve a philosophy.

But, in Gilson's view, the debt is bilateral. While fully recognizing the historical fact that the mediaeval obligation to the Greeks was immense, he also claims that "the debt of Hellenism to the Middle Ages is as great, and nothing is less appreciated". Mediaeval philosophical thought communicated to Greek thought, it seems, some share of its own vitality and enabled it to embark upon a new career.

It is at this point in his argument that our author addresses himself to the second part of his task: what was the spirit of mediaeval philosophy? He tells us that its spirit was the Christianity in the atmosphere of which it was wrought. Greek philosophy, that is philosophy pure and simple, still lived on in the Middle Ages; but, from the fact that it was now carried on under Christian conditions, it received a new impulsion and assumed a new aspect. He insists that it is essentially the same philosophy of old; all the older elements are there preserved and all the characteristics that make it a genuine philosophy. For the historical explanation of this grafting of the old upon the new, Gilson goes back to the works of Paul, Justin, Lactantius, Augustine, and Anselm. He believes that these men, four of whom were at one and the same time philosophers and Christians, acquired from the Christian revelation a fixed center of reference which helped to bring order and unity into their thought.

Thus, they obtained, it appears, a criterion, a norm of judgement, a principle of discernment and selection, allowing them to restore rational truth to itself by purging away the errors that encumbered it. The philosophy that emerged is called by our author the Christian philosophy, a system of rational thought into which the supernatural descends as a constitutive element; not, however, into its texture, he warns us, but into the work of its construction. The author's demonstration of this theme is purely historical, a fact that he is at pains to remind us of repeatedly throughout the book. So the volume must be read as an essay in the history of philosophy. There are several occasions when the argument seems to take on the quality of a religious apologetic, but in the main it is rigidly objective. The thread that runs through the book is that every speculative advance in the Middle Ages happened as though the Judaeo-Christian revelation were a religious source of philosophical development, the outstanding witness to that development being the mediaeval period.

In following that thread the author encounters most of the outstanding problems of philosophy: being and its necessity, the contingency of being, the notions of analogy, causality, and finality, the definition of person, the paradox of free will and law, the meaning of conscience, and the problem of man's destiny. Moderns are not exempted from the trial. Kant, Hegel, Fichte, and even the Neo-Scholastic Rousselot are called to the witness stand to be cross-examined by this modern practitioner of the philosophical skill which made the Middle Ages what they were.

CHAS F. RONAYNE